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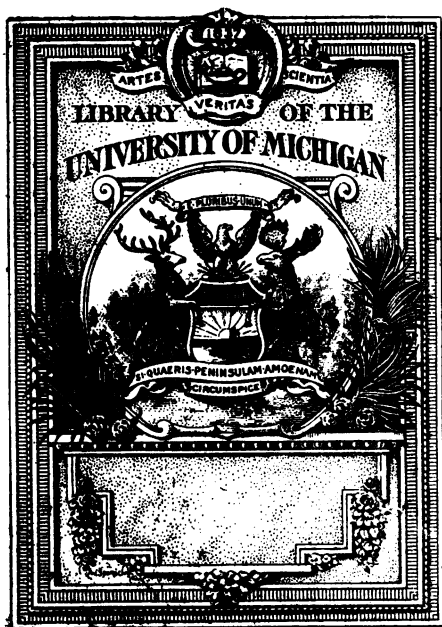
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JOHN WICLIF:

His Life, Times, and Teaching.

BY THE

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P R E F A C E.

"To the memory of one of the greatest of Englishmen, his country has been singularly and painfully ungrateful. On most of us the dim image looks down, like the portrait of the first of a long line of kings, without personality or expression—he is the first of the Reformers."¹

These were the words of the late Professor Shirley, who laboured to impress his fellow-countrymen with a deep conviction of the debt of gratitude which they owe to John Wiclif. He has indeed conferred the greatest benefits upon them. He first translated the whole Bible into the language of the English people, and distributed it by means of his "Poor Priests" among all classes. He was, as we shall see, the writer of numberless books and tracts, connected with the most important religious questions of the day, which were designed to aid in the Reformation of the Church and the spiritual and moral regeneration of his fellow-countrymen. Through his English works, he became the father of our English prose. While we admit the important part played by the character of Henry VIII., we ought to see that a gradual

¹ "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," Introduction, p. xlv.

education of the English people for the Reformation had been advancing beneath the surface of society since Wiclif's time, to which he was instrumental. By means of his works, the principles of the Reformation were conveyed through Bohemia to Germany, where they assisted Luther in effecting the Reformation associated with him.

These subjects will be brought forward in the following work. The wonder is that the illustrious man on whom Dr. Shirley pronounced his glowing eulogium should have been comparatively forgotten. Many men are now remembered and honoured by their fellow-countrymen whose services, when compared with those of Wiclif, sink into utter insignificance. The causes have been well stated by Professor Montagu Burrows, of Oxford, in an admirable work, "Wiclif's Place in History," recently published.¹ One of those causes must be looked for in the persistent efforts of the unreformed Church to place his opinions under ban and anathema, and to destroy every trace of his work. The members of that Church felt that, if he were successful, their ecclesiastical and doctrinal system must utterly perish. They were only too successful also in identifying the Reformer with the extreme socialistic and revolutionary dogmas which, as we shall see in the following work, he would have utterly repudiated. This is only one case out of many in which the followers of a great leader depart from or go beyond the teaching

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," pp. 8-22.

of one to whom they owed their origin. Another cause has been the expression of his opinions in the language of the Scholastic Philosophy, well understood in his day, but obscure in the present day, from which those who do not understand it have obtained matter of accusation against him.

But the principal causes of the prejudice in the minds of some against him are, that they have formed their estimate of him from the works of his opponents, or from works incorrectly attributed to him; that they have had at their service only very small portions of his own works; and that they have judged him by articles unfairly taken from his writings by Synods which were determined to procure his condemnation. Other causes have been the uncertain date of his writings, and the neglect, as we shall see in the following work, to attend to his progressive development. Dr. Shirley, writing in 1858, states—"Of his original English works, nothing beyond one or two short tracts has seen the light."¹ Of the great mass of Wiclif's Latin works, only one treatise of importance, the "Trialogus," has, up to this year, been printed. This work, published abroad in 1525, eighty years after the invention of printing, and again in 1753, was edited by Dr. Lechler, in 1869, for the Oxford University Press. Many of his other Latin works are buried in manuscript at Vienna. One of the most important of these is his great work, the "Summa in Theologia," containing his celebrated Theory of

¹ "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," p. xlv.

Dominion, without which we cannot fully understand his position. Professor Montagu Burrows has instituted a comparison between this work and Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity."¹ After the death of Anne of Bohemia, the wife of Richard II., the works were carried by her attendants to that country for safety. They were also taken to Bohemia by others. Bohemian hands were employed at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the spirit of Wiclif took a strong hold of the inhabitants of Bohemia, in multiplying copies of them. The Imperial Library at Vienna possesses about forty volumes, consisting chiefly of unprinted Latin works of Wiclif, of which, in some instances, not a copy is to be found in England. They were removed to Vienna on the dissolution of the monasteries in the last century by the Emperor Joseph II. But, without these, it is impossible to form a correct opinion of him as a Reformer. The importance of the contents too, in the case of the Latin works, is far superior to that of the English. Dr. Lechler writes thus:² "Scientifically considered, it is only the Latin works which are of value. Wiclif's philosophical and theological position can only be learned from them with certainty and thoroughness; while his English writings are chiefly valuable, in part for the history of the English language and literature, and in part for our knowledge of the influence of Wiclif upon the English people."

We must not, therefore, be surprised to find that,

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," pp. 62-68.

² Lorimer's translation of Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 325.

from the operation of these causes, many have formed an erroneous or indistinct conception of the illustrious Reformer. He is still "without personality or expression." Many admit that he influenced men of his own age and succeeding generations; but few understand the nature of that influence. The truth of some of the preceding observations may be illustrated by a reference to his biographers. Professor Burrows has given an excellent sketch of them.¹ Foxe, in his "Acts and Monuments," while he explained the full nature of the reforms which Wiclif was anxious to promote, gives us generally an incorrect impression of him, because he had only a slight knowledge of his works, which he confuses with those of his followers. He omits, too, all reference to the translation of the Bible. Dr. James wrote a learned "Apology" for Wiclif in 1608, and Lewis his admirable history of "Wiclif's Life and Sufferings" in 1720, both which works may be used with advantage in the present day. We have, however, since they wrote, obtained additional information about Wiclif, so that parts of their works are inaccurate. They do not seem to have been aware of his progressive development. Dr. James was intensely disgusted with the "garbling" of the Reformer's opinions which had been carried on for many years by his enemies. Wood, in his "History and Antiquities of Oxford," and Jeremy Collier, the Non-juror, whose "Ecclesiastical History," published in Queen Anne's reign, has always been a standard authority, have ascribed to

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," pp. 24-28.

him opinions and motives which they have borrowed from the works of his opponents. Lingard not only studiously endeavours to represent Wiclif in an unfavourable point of view, but also quotes his opinions from works which may not have been written by him, and has grossly misrepresented his opinions on the Sacraments.

We now come to more modern times. Dr. Vaughan deserves the greatest credit for his painstaking works on the "Life of Wiclif." They have been the chief means of bringing his work before the English people. But, since he wrote, additional information as to Wiclif has been obtained, which renders some of his statements inaccurate. Le Bas' "Life" is no longer trustworthy, because it was written before Lechler and others had carefully examined Wiclifite literature. He seems, too, to have wanted that critical spirit which might have enabled him to discover oft-repeated fallacies; but he has given, on the whole, a fair representation of the opinions of Wiclif. Dean Hook, to whom as a Church historian we are generally so much indebted, as we shall see in the following work, has brought charges against Wiclif which a more careful examination of his writings would have convinced him could not be sustained. He has erred in following the Church historian, Milner. The author cannot agree with him in thinking that Milner has written the "Life of Wiclif" with "singular discretion and impartiality."¹ On the contrary, he often

¹ "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iii., p. 84.

allows his prejudice against Wiclif to warp his judgment. He also erred, as we shall see, because he was ignorant of his development and of the dates of Wiclif's works. Thus he thought that Wiclif was receding from the position which he once occupied—an entire mistake. Chancellor Massingberd's able account of Wiclif, and Milman's excellent sketch, may be criticised because they want information. The former has quoted as Wiclif's, works which he did not write. He would have written a better account of him if he had seen that we must compare statements made in some of his works with those made in others, in order that we may form a correct judgment respecting them. Dean Milman has erred; as the following work will show, in saying that Wiclif "did not offer a new system of doctrine to the religious necessities of man," and that "from Wiclifism it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to frame Articles like those of the Church of England."¹ They would both have been gainers if the opportunity had been given to them of exploring the spacious field of Wiclifite literature which is now being gradually unfolded to our view.

The author does not, then, think that on any one life, or sketch of his life, for the reasons just given, full reliance can be placed. As a large majority have gained their knowledge of him from those works, they have often formed an impression of him in some respects erroneous. But the darkness which surrounded him is now passing away. The late Walter

¹ "Latin Christianity," vol. viii., p. 203.

Waddington Shirley, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, laboured to dispel it. He is chiefly known by a Catalogue of the works of Wiclif which he has ascertained to be genuine, with the dates of the years when they were written, as well as by an admirable preface to the "*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*," or "*John Wiclif's Tares*," a collection of documents, the work of T. Netter of Walden, the great opponent of Wiclif. It includes also other matter which makes that title inaccurate. Dr. Buddensieg, in his able Preface to the *Polemical Works*, recently published, observes: "Shirley ranks far above all his predecessors in the minuteness of his research and his penetrating judgment, and has left indispensable aid to his successors in the province of Wiclif research."¹ Others have followed in the same department of research. We thus know very well his genuine works, and the dates of many of them. The "*Select English Works*" have been printed in accordance with Dr. Shirley's wish, by the University Press at Oxford, and have been edited by Mr. T. Arnold; and other English works, omitted by Arnold, have been published by Mr. F. Matthew for the early English Text Society. But, as we shall see in the following work, the greatest credit is due to a foreigner, Dr. Lechler, who has given us an admirable life, the result of the examination of the works of Dr. Shirley and others, and of the unpublished Latin Manuscripts at Vienna. Through the publication of this "*Life*,"

¹ Page iv.

we are able to correct some errors in regard to his career. This work has been well translated and edited by Dr. Lorimer.¹ The Wiclif Society, too, has been founded for the purpose of removing from England the disgrace of having left in manuscript the most important works of her great early Reformer. Among these may be mentioned especially the Latin Manuscripts at Vienna. Other works will follow the Polemical Works just referred to. We cannot expect to add to the information which may thus be obtained any from the archives at Rome, the examination of which is now allowed by the Pope. Dr. Lorimer informs us that they have been examined by competent persons, and that they add nothing to our previous knowledge of Wiclif.²

We shall, therefore, now soon be in a position to do full justice to Wiclif. We shall be able to gaze on his living and breathing image as it is brought before us in his works; we shall not see the disfigured and distorted lineaments exhibited to us in works not his own, and in those of his opponents. We shall also be able, to use the words of Dr. Buddensieg in the preface to the Polemical Works, "to trace the growth and development of a great nation in the person of its greatest representative."³ The author hopes that the following work may contribute to the knowledge of Wiclif. He has consulted all the

¹ When there are references in the following work to Lechler's "Life," they are made to the English translation.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 320; note by Lorimer.

³ Page vi.

available sources of information, including the Polemical Works, and has endeavoured to form a just estimate of his character, opinions, and work. Professor Burrows has kindly aided him by examining the proof-sheets. He has taken the place of the late Professor Shirley at Oxford in his efforts to excite an interest in the subject. He can only express his earnest hope that the result of a more careful examination of Wiclif's work this year, when prominence will be given to him through the celebration of the Quincentenary of his death, will be a deeper conviction that he was largely instrumental to the Reformation, not only in England but also on the continent of Europe.

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JOHN WICLIF:

HIS LIFE, TIMES, AND TEACHING.

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WICLIF IN HIS NATIVE PLACE.

Difficulty in obtaining information about Wiclif.—His native place.—His family.—Date of his birth.—Probable influence of the scenery of Wycliffe, and the associations connected with the neighbourhood, upon him.—The Universities the only avenue to distinction open to men of the middle and lower class.—The number of students at Oxford great.—Wiclif probably educated near his own home.—Sent by his parents to Oxford.

THE illustrious Wiclif comes before us only indistinctly through the mists of ages.¹ Many facts relating to him are, as we shall see, involved in obscurity, and are still subjects of controversy. Learned men, who have groped painfully in the dark, have, after much labour and patient investigation,

¹ With regard to the orthography of the name Wiclif, there was, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a great variety of ways of spelling it. Vaughan states that the name was written in twenty different forms. As Dr. Lechler observes (vol. i., p. 147), the question should be settled by documents nearest in date to his own age. Now the oldest document, of an official character, is the Royal Commission of July 26, 1374, nominating him as one of the Commissioners at Bruges, in which he is called "Magister Johannes de Wiclif, Sacre Theologiæ Professor."

arrived at a conjecture respecting some details of his personal history, which may be said to be almost a certainty. Even when he comes forward prominently on the world's high stage, the notices of the scenes in which he acted are so meagre and unsatisfactory, that they convey to us only an indistinct impression of his form and features as he moves amid the mighty throng of ecclesiastics, and statesmen, and warriors. We are not admitted to the inner chamber—we cannot trace every step of the process by which this man, with "strength surpassing nature's law," was gradually trained for the great work committed to his charge. We must depend upon his works for much of our information respecting him. We cannot realise him in the intercourse of daily life. There is no record of his friendships, of his enmities, of his conversations, of the tone of his mind, of his deportment among his companions, of the habitual complexion of his temper, of all those particulars which impart a great charm to biography, and enable us to have a distinct conception of the individual thus brought before us.

The case is entirely different with such men as Erasmus and Luther. We can follow them from their cradles to their graves. We can see the fabrication, the polishing, and the sharpening of the weapon which was to mow down the principalities and powers of darkness. We can observe them amid the interesting scenes and occupations of public and private life. We see Erasmus from his earliest years toiling on painfully, amid difficulties which would

have daunted the most determined courage, until he became, by his transcendent abilities, the greatest scholar, and, in some respects, the greatest divine on this side of the Alps. We can see the influences concurring to the formation of that character of indecision which has tarnished the fame of services rendered to the cause of the Reformation in the early part of his career. In his celebrated letters, the springs of his actions, which would otherwise have been hidden, his hopes and his fears, his faults, his follies, and his virtues, are unveiled to us. We can trace Luther through his severe struggles, in his cell in the Augustinian Priory, until he obtained a firm grasp of the truth of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and was brought into the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." We can follow him also in those four volumes containing the records of his conversations with his friends, full of "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," which show us how it was that he obtained his wonderful reputation, and that he was able to emancipate the nations of Europe from the power of their spiritual oppressor. We can trace both of them in their connexion with wise men, and princes, and potentates, some of whom fill a large space in the annals of England and other European countries. We are thus enabled to form a distinct conception of their character amid the interesting scenes and occupations of active and of private life. But Wiclif comes before us as a kind of impalpable agency. We cannot, therefore, group him with any of those illustrious men who have come down to suc-

ceeding generations. He stands like a rock, in the desert waste of ocean, in a grand and mysterious loneliness. We trust, however, that we can obtain sufficient information respecting him to show that we owe him a vast debt of gratitude, and to convince us that he was the most illustrious of the Reformers before the Reformation.

The only information which we have as to the birthplace of Wiclif is given by the celebrated antiquary, Leland, who, writing 150 years after Wiclif's death, in his notes on the district in Yorkshire in which the parish of Wycliffe is situated, refers to it as the place "from which Wiclif, the heretic, derived his origin."¹ He has, however, in his "Itinerary," written as follows:—"It is reported that John Wiclif, the heretic, was born at Spresswell, a small village, a good mile off from Richmond."² The great difficulties in connexion with this statement are that no place bearing that name at that distance from it has been discovered, and that Richmond, too, is ten miles from Wycliffe. Dr. Vaughan fancied that he had succeeded in overcoming them.³ By inquiry on the spot he seemed to have ascertained that originally the town of Richmond occupied a very different position, "three miles below Wycliffe," and that "close to the river Tees, half a mile from Wycliffe," stood a small village or hamlet, called Spresswell. But the place to which he refers as Old Richmond is the ruined

¹ "Collectanea," ii., p. 322; "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," x., note 4.

² "Itinerary," v., fol. 114; "Fascic. Zizan.," x., 4.

³ *Athenæum*, 1861, 20th April, p. 529.

village of Barford, nearly five miles from Wycliffe, evidently more than "a good mile" from the supposed site of Spresswell. Such a town as Old Richmond has never been known. Traces of the village to which Dr. Vaughan refers, half a mile from the church at Wycliffe, are plainly visible. But though the exact spot may still be doubtful, it may be stated as a fact that it must have been close by and among the places named, and that the Wycliffes of Wycliffe were the collateral descendants of the illustrious Reformer.

This family had been settled in the parish, as lords of the manor, from the Norman Conquest till the beginning of the seventeenth century. Afterwards, the property passed, through marriage, to the family of Tunstall. Another branch of the family carried on the name. The great difficulty in the way of associating him with this family is that no notice of him has been found in their records. We shall not, however, be surprised that this should be the case, when we remember that they would be anxious to obliterate all trace of their connexion with one who involved his family in deep disgrace by assailing the religion of his forefathers. Perhaps we may trace to their connexion with him their bigoted attachment to the dogmas of Romanism, which, as we learn from old documents, they displayed up to the time of their extinction. Half of the parish joined them in refusing to separate from the Church of Rome, even after the Reformation.¹ This division exists to the present

¹ Lechler, vol. i., p. 126.

day. The estate is still in the possession of Roman Catholics, who have erected a chapel in place of the private one which they used at the hall. Perhaps they became the more determined to make this display of their devoted and dutiful allegiance to the Church of Rome, in order that they might shield themselves from the vengeance which, if they had been less decided, might have descended on the family of one who had endeavoured to dismantle its towers, and tear up its bulwarks.

We have some difficulty in settling the date of Wiclif's birth. The great majority of writers, following John Lewis, to whom we are so much indebted for the collection of documents relating to the Reformer, have, without producing any evidence of the truth of the assertion, fixed on the year 1324.¹ They have thought that he might have been sixty at the time of his death in 1384, of which last date we have undoubted evidence. But he is constantly using expressions in his writings which show that he may have been of a greater age than Lewis here assigns to him. When he states in the preface to his sermons, written in 1382, that he had collected them at "the end of his life," he must have been of a greater age than fifty-eight, judging from the natural import of the words, which is that he was nearer the three-score years and ten, the allotted period of human existence. He could not have used them, because paralysis had now laid its hand upon him,

¹ Lewis, p. i. ; Baber, p. ii.

and warned him of his approaching departure ; for he shows by his extraordinary literary activity during the months immediately following the publication, that "his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated."¹

The youth of Wiclif was passed in a region in the northern district of Yorkshire, consecrated by poetry and song. Sir Walter Scott has well described, in his poem of "Rokeby," the beautiful and romantic scenery ; the river foaming and flowing

" Like a steed in frantic fit,
That flings the froth from curb and bit ; "

its tributary streams, which wind like silver threads through the landscape ; the stately woods which fringe their banks ; the shivered cliffs, from which the village of Wycliffe derives its name, all splintered and uneven, and swathed with ivy,

" That rear their haughty head
High o'er the river's darksome bed ; "

and the deep romantic dale, which the superstition of the neighbourhood has peopled at dead of night with sights and sounds of terror. These scenes, amid which Wiclif wandered and mused in his early boyhood, may have aided in developing that love of liberty and independence which animated him in

¹ "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," p. xii. Shirley refers here to MS. in the Imperial Library at Vienna. He also states that Dr. Gascoigne says that Wiclif suffered from paralysis during the last two years of his life.—"Theological Dictionary," quoted by Lewis, p. 336.

² "Rokeby," canto ii., s. 8.

mature life to aid his fellow-countrymen in breaking the bonds of their spiritual oppressor. We find many proofs in his writings that the historic traditions relating to stirring events in his native land, which lived in the memory of the population, had produced a deep impression on the susceptible imagination of the boy, and had been the means of animating him with patriotic ardour.¹ The stately and magnificent fortress of Barnard Castle, with its massive towers, still majestic even in ruin, overhanging the Tees near Wycliffe, erected by Barnard Balliol, the ancestor of the short and unfortunate dynasty of that name which succeeded to the crown of Scotland under the patronage of Edward I. and Edward III., would be connected in his mind with the heroic deeds of Wallace and of Bruce, who, unlike their fellow-countrymen, had animated the inhabitants of Scotland to shake off the yoke of the oppressor. Sir Walter Scott has paid a just tribute to the beauty of the scenery, when he says,—

“ Who in that dim wood-glen hath stray’d
Yet long’d for Roslin’s magic glade?
Who, wandering there, hath sought to change
Even for that vale so stern and strange,
Where Cartland’s crags, fantastic rent,
Through her green copse like spires are sent ? ”

But, after all, he gives the preference to his native land, because those scenes are associated with the achievements of the heroic Wallace—

“ Yet, Albin, yet the praise be thine,
Thy scenes and story to combine ! ”

¹ Lechler, vol. i., p. 128.

Thou bid'st him, who by Roslin strays,
List to the deeds of other days ;
'Mid Cartland's crags thou show'st the cave,
The refuge of thy champion brave ;
Giving each rock its storied tale,
Pouring a lay for every dale,
Knitting, as with a moral band,
Thy native legends with thy land." ¹

Scott was not aware that here also our hearts ought to throb with greater emotion, because here we are reminded of one who laboured to accomplish a far more glorious deliverance than that of his native land,—of one who strove to emancipate the mind from its thralldom, and to burst the bands of spiritual despotism.

Wiclif's parents, no doubt, anxious that their son should achieve distinction, decided on sending him to the University. In fact, this was almost the only avenue to it which was open to the middle and lower classes. The aspirants to martial fame were found among the aristocracy. The supply of soldiers was very limited. Foot soldiers were enlisted for a short and hasty campaign ; but no sooner had they performed the particular service required of them, than they were disbanded. Even mercenary bands formed a very small part of the population. The monastic establishments, and the various orders of friars, as well as the secular clergy, constantly needed recruits to fill up the gaps which death had made in their ranks. The demand for them was inexhaustible. We must remember, too, that lawyers, physicians, and states-

¹ "Rokeby," canto ii., s. 3.

men were to be obtained from the ranks of the clergy. Many, also, took orders, because they hoped that, though born in a humble position, they might rise, as ecclesiastics, to the pinnacle of worldly greatness, and be remembered long after the generation of mortals around them had passed away. We need not, therefore, be surprised to hear that young men of the lower class flocked to the Universities, and that the number of students at Oxford, under Henry III., amounted to 30,000, "an exaggeration which," as Hallam observes, "seems to imply that the real number was very great."¹ "But among these," says Anthony Wood, "a company of varlets, who pretended to be scholars, shuffled themselves in, and did act much villany in the University by thieving and quarrelling. They lived under no discipline, neither had they tutors; but only for fashion's sake would sometimes thrust themselves into the schools at ordinary lectures, and when they went to perform any mischief, then would they be accounted scholars, that so they might free themselves from the jurisdiction of the burghers."² "If we allow three varlets to one scholar," as Hallam observes on this passage, "the University will still have been very fully frequented by the latter."³ Barbers, too, copyists, writers, and other serving persons in those days were matriculated, and some took part in scholastic exercises.⁴

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol. iii., p. 423.

² Wood's "Hist. and Antiquities of Oxford," vol. i., p. 206.

³ Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol. iii., p. 424 (note).

⁴ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 66.

Oxford was the University selected by his parents. If we suppose, with Lechler, that 1320 was the date of his birth, we may fix 1335 as the year of his admission to the University.¹ We know that in those days boys of an earlier age than fifteen went to Oxford and Cambridge. In fact, among the youth who are described as scholars in the middle ages, there was a large number of mere children. We find Richard FitzRalph, Archbishop of Armagh, complaining that boys under fourteen were admitted to Oxford. They would help to account for the large number of students just referred to. We learn that the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward V., and his brother, the Duke of York, are described as studying at Oxford at the early age of ten. These pupils were received into schools, which Wood has called the nurseries of grammarians, till capable of ascending to the higher arts.² We might then suppose that Wiclif went to the University as a boy. But such a supposition is very improbable. His home was in the north of England, a long distance from the University. We cannot suppose, when we take into account the danger and difficulty of travelling in those days, that Wiclif can have been sent to Oxford till he was fifteen or sixteen years of age.³ We may reflect with gratitude that we do not live in times when travellers were

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 130.

² Vaughan's "Life of Wiclif," vol. i., p. 217 (note).

³ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 131; and Vaughan, "John de Wycliffe," p. 42, where travelling in England in the fourteenth century is well described.

stopped and plundered by marauders in the face of day, and that those great roads have been formed which not only facilitate the interchange of the various productions of nature and art, but also remove national and provincial antipathies, and bind together all the members of the human family. When, therefore, his parents sent him to the University, they might naturally suppose that they bade farewell to him for life. In fact, we cannot find any intimation in his works that he ever again visited the home of his fathers, or the scenes associated with the recollections of his childhood. They would, therefore, if they were prudent and conscientious, wait till his character was formed, and until they had prepared him by diligent training to withstand the temptations which he was soon to encounter. The barque would otherwise have been launched on a stormy sea in a condition little fitted to withstand the fury of the elements. The consequence would have been that it would soon have been shattered by the violence of the tempest, and would at length have sunk beneath the raging billows. Besides, Wiclif might have gained the rudiments of knowledge at a far less distance from home than the University of Oxford. We know that England was at this time a land of schools. Five hundred religious houses had risen in England during the interval between the Conquest and the reign of John, to which schools were generally annexed. It is evident that, so early as 1138, the school system, as distinguished from the monastic establishments, had extended itself from towns to

villages. Edward III. speaks of an establishment in the border districts in which two hundred young clerks in his time were gaining the rudiments of knowledge. In some such establishment the northern students generally made so much progress as to appear at the Universities fully qualified to enter on the studies more peculiar to those celebrated seats of learning.¹ We may then suppose that Wiclif, having been trained at one of these schools, where his love for learning, and his desire for distinction had been awakened, repaired to Oxford, anxious to slake within its walls the thirst of knowledge and of early ambition.

¹ Robertson's "View of Society," s. i. ; Wood's "Annals," vol. i., pp. 105-107 ; Collier's "Ecclesiastical History," vol. i., p. 497.

CHAPTER II.

WICLIF IN OXFORD.—1335-1367.

Oxford in the fourteenth century.—Wiclif's probable College.—His studies before the degree of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts.—He was distinguished in logic and dialectics.—His ignorance of Greek.—He applied himself to science.—Oxford distinguished as a school of science in this century.—This distinction probably owing to the disciples of Roger Bacon.—Description of the latter.—Archbishops Bradwardine and FitzRalph, and their influence on Wiclif.—His theological studies.—He acquires the title of "the Evangelical Doctor."—His mastery of the Scholastic Philosophy.—Description and influence of it.—He was probably a Fellow of Merton.—Antagonism between Northern and Southern nations.—He did not leave Balliol on account of the poverty of the College.—His work at Oxford.—Appointed Master of Balliol, and afterwards Rector of Fillingham.—His daily life unknown.—Description of the Great Plague.—Its probable influence on Wiclif and his work.—Oxford a scene of warfare.—Great conflict on St. Scholastica's Day.—Probable influence of that conflict, of the contests between the nations, and of other feuds, upon Wiclif.—Wiclif proved to have been Warden of Canterbury Hall.—He takes his degree of Doctor in Theology.—His ejection from Canterbury Hall an era in his life.

OXFORD was not in those days a city of grand buildings and spacious streets. It was a small town. The only colleges in existence at the time when Wiclif

entered the University were Merton, founded in 1274; Balliol, 1260-82; Exeter, 1314; Oriel, 1324; and University College in 1332. Instead of the famous High Street was a narrow road, which served at once for carriages and foot-passengers. On each side of it were high buildings of wood and plaster, from the doors and windows of which the smoke issued, in the absence of chimneys. Scattered about the town were Halls, in the thirteenth century amounting to 300, every one of which served for the accommodation of 100 boarders.¹ We can easily see, therefore, that for this reason the number of students might have been very great. Many poor students herded in those Halls very much like cattle, or lived in holes and corners, now inhabited by the most degraded class of the poor. Mingling with these students, supported on daily alms, or with Anthony Wood's "varlets," was to be seen the gay young noble, with his train of feudal retainers. In one part of the town, in a gloomy apartment, which served as a hall of learning, might be seen, on a rude platform, a learned professor, a Wiclif, or an Ockham, or a Roger Bacon, who was leading the students, in the Church Latin of the day, through a maze of scholastic subtleties, before whom were assembled, often in mean attire, the students, on rude benches—an Edmund, who, at the age of twelve, had begged his way from Abingdon, and a Thomas Bradwardine, the Profound Doctor—the former of whom became a

¹ Hübner's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 55.

Saint of the Church, and both of whom ascended the Archiepiscopal throne of Canterbury. In another part of the town were to be heard the loud shouts of combatants, the clashing of swords, the sound of riven helmets, as the students fought, hand to hand, in the streets. A wild, tumultuous scene it was which Oxford at that time presented to the view. We must admit that there is another side of the picture. This was the golden age of intellectual activity at Oxford. The vast numbers assembled in the University show an ardent desire for learning in the nation.¹ But still the sights and sounds just described would, so far as Oxford is concerned, disenchant the most ardent admirer of mediævalism. Gay cavalcades, pomp and pageantry, were indeed sometimes seen in the streets. But still the splendour which they exhibited was like an occasional gleam of sunshine over the landscape on a dark and stormy day.

The common idea hitherto has been that Wiclif went first to Queen's College; that afterwards he was admitted to Merton; that from Merton he passed to Balliol, where he became Master in 1361, and that then he became Warden of Canterbury Hall. But the fact of his connexion with three of these colleges has been disputed. The only point on which all parties are agreed is that he was Master of Balliol. If he went to Oxford in 1335, he could not at that time have been a member of Queen's; for it was not founded till 1340. In fact, we can find no trace in

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 67.

the bursars' rolls of his residence at Queen's till 1363, when he occupied rooms in the college. We shall see that he continued to do so in various years from 1363 to 1380. The question, however, arises, whether it is necessary to suppose him, when he first came to Oxford, to have been a member of any college, and whether we are not guilty of an anachronism in making the members of the University members of colleges. Very few of the large number of students referred to could have obtained admission to a college. Many of them must have been admitted to the 300 halls, hostels, or inns, which were then open for their reception; and some, we are told, had no lodging but the town wall.¹ If, however, we are to say that Wiclif was a member of any college, we should certainly give the preference to Balliol.² Some connexion must have existed between his family and the college; for two members of Balliol, the Master, John Hugate, and William Wycliffe, a fellow, held the living of Wycliffe in the patronage of his family. Besides, Barnard Castle on the Tees, just described, erected by the ancestor of Sir John de Balliol, the founder of Balliol College, the father of the unfortunate king whom Edward I. dethroned, was, as we have seen, in the immediate neighbourhood of Wycliffe.

We should like very much to know the influences at Oxford which concurred to mould his character, and to develop his abilities. We can, however, only

¹ *Church Quarterly Review*, for October, 1877, p. 128.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 132; and "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," p. 516.

faintly trace them. Mr. Anstey, in his work, "*Munimenta Academica*," enables us, to a certain extent, to follow him in his daily prosecution of those studies which have rendered his name illustrious. To these, we gather from his works, and from other testimony, he devoted all his energies. He must at first have dispensed with books, for they were a costly luxury.¹ Besides, as the lectures which he must have attended were chiefly oral, the use of them was not indispensable. After he had heard long enough, he was required to repeat what he had learned. We find that occasionally the lecturer might be interrupted by the entrance of the bedel, who has come to summon a scholar before the Chancellor, because he has carried off beer from a taverner, or because he has been one of a party who assaulted a rival hall, or because he has shot at the proctor when he was walking the streets at night. The person against whom this last charge was brought has often been fined for wearing a dagger, and been more than once excommunicated for the grossest outrages. A large body of the students immediately arise, and accompany him to the Chancellor's Commissary, some of whom seem at first determined to effect his liberation. The idea is, however, afterwards abandoned. The air of determination which they wear, the hilts of the daggers in the girdle of the Chancellor's Commissary and the proctors, show that they are quite prepared for the worst, and that they are determined to assert the

¹ Anstey, Part i., p. lxxvii.

majesty of the law. The end, however, is that the culprit is convicted, and is banished for ever from the University.¹

The scholar was obliged to pass four years in the studies which were to precede his Bachelor's degree. These were logic, rhetoric, grammar, and arithmetic. He might be examined in responsions not before one year at the least from the date of his admission to the University.² We are unable to say exactly what were the subjects required for that examination. Probably the student was examined in the elementary parts of the subjects just referred to.³ He would, after the morning lecture, attend in the schools for the purpose of taking part in public disputations. Then, at the end of four years, came the determination, or the examination for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. No doubt the name "determination" took its rise from the supreme importance attached to the science of logic, the candidate being expected to determine certain questions which were submitted to him.⁴ At nine o'clock, on the morning of Ash-Wednesday, the great bell of St. Mary's began to sound, summoning the candidate to come to his determination on that day, or on some day between it and the following Tuesday. The thirty-two schools in School Street are occupied by their several masters, who sit there,

¹ Anstey, Part i., p. lxxx.

² *Ibid.*, Part i., p. lxxviii.

³ The word "responsions" derives its name from "*respondere questioni*," an expression which refers to the oral instruction given in the schools.

⁴ Anstey, Part i., p. lxxxii.

awaiting the arrival of the candidates. Six Masters of Arts were required to certify on oath in the congregation the fitness of the candidates in knowledge, morals, age, and even stature and personal appearance. Four Regent masters were chosen to decide the fitness of their testimony. The scholars and the masters appeared for this purpose before them. If their testimony was accepted, the scholars made oath that they had completed their studies, and had responded in due form. When these preliminaries were completed, the candidates were admitted to determine. There was nothing in those days corresponding to "*plucking*." The chance of failure consisted in the inability to give the required testimony, or to take the oath as to past studies. Each candidate was required to stand up before the master whom he had selected for disputation during nine days, from nine o'clock to twelve, and from one to five. The master exerted every effort to *pose* him. We need hardly say that the whole proceedings were *vivâ voce*, written examinations being impossible in those days, from the paucity of writing materials. The only stimulus to exertion would be the disgrace which would attend the student or the applause which would resound through the school, if he were cast down or were successful in the intellectual encounter.¹

The studies required for the degree of Master of Arts, which might be taken in three years from the

¹ Anstey, Part i., pp. lxxxiii.-lxxxvi., and p. 34.

degree of Bachelor of Arts, were geometry, astronomy, music, and natural, moral, and metaphysical philosophy. Then, after seven years' work, the student became a Master of Arts, and might lecture. We see, then, that the course of studies in Mediæval Oxford, consisting to a great extent in disputation and in the display of logical acumen up to the degree of Master of Arts, was calculated not for the cultivation of scholarship, or the formation of a taste for polite letters, but to prepare the student for the higher faculties of law, medicine, and theology, in which he might hope to achieve distinction, when, having finished his preparation, he departed from the University, and commenced in right earnest the business of life.¹

We know, not only from his own writings produced in mature life, but also from the testimony of others, that Wiclif greatly distinguished himself in logical and dialectical studies. His contemporary opponent, Knighton, was obliged to confess that "he came to be reckoned inferior to none of his time in philosophy, and incomparable in the performance of school exercises, a man of profound wit, and very strong and powerful in disputations, and who was by the common sort of divines esteemed little less than a god."² We may also ascertain generally the nature of his other studies. We know from his writings that he was ignorant of Greek. We come to this conclusion not only from the frequent mistakes made in

¹ Anstey, pp. lxxxvi., lxxxvii.

² Knighton "De Eventibus Angliæ," Col. 2, 644.

the writing of Greek words, but also in the absurd attempts at etymology often to be found in his works.¹ The fact was that he and other scholars made use of the Latin tongue as their scientific organ, and obtained their knowledge of Christian and classical literature in Greek only through the medium of Latin translations. As early, indeed, as the thirteenth century the sun of Greek literature had risen above the horizon, and was illumining with a ruddy glow the summit of the western hills; for the illustrious Emperor, Frederick II., established universities, which, if they had continued to flourish, might have hastened on the glorious era of Italian art and literature.² Greek was spoken in many parts of his kingdom. If he had lived and prospered, the revival of the study of the Greek language might have taken place in the thirteenth century. But afterwards we learn that in Italy, even Petrarch, "the Italian songster of Laura and of love," knew comparatively little of it. We find him complaining that the barbarians, *i.e.*, the French and the Germans, had not heard the name of Homer, the immortal bard of antiquity. We find that not before the end of the fourteenth century, the sun, never again to

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 135 and 148. We have, for instance, the mis-written word "*apocrisus*," instead of "*apocryphus*." He supposes "s" to have been written for "f." It is then remarked that the word comes from "*apo*" ("*de*") and "*crisis*" ("*secretum*"), because the subject is the secrets of the Church. "De Veritate," &c., c. ii.

² Smyth's "Lectures on Modern History," c. ix.; and my "Life of Erasmus," pp. 7, 9.

be eclipsed, began to pour a flood of light over the nations of Europe. A multitude of scholars, when they saw the Turks surrounding Constantinople, afraid of the horrors impending over the city, snatched some manuscripts from the Byzantine libraries, and hastened over the sea to a country where they might devote all their energies to the prosecution of their studies. The pupils of these men in Italy were soon capable of transferring to England and other countries the knowledge which they had acquired for themselves. At the end of the fifteenth century Greek began to be really studied at Oxford. W. Grocyn, Latimer, Linacre, and Erasmus, formed a little band who, having gained in the manner just referred to a knowledge of Greek, were labouring to kindle in the minds of their fellow-countrymen an enthusiasm for those authors who have shed an undying glory upon the land of their birth.¹

We see then that Wiclif could not, from the want of instructors at Oxford, have applied himself to the study of Greek literature. Perhaps he would have had no love for that department of polite learning. We come to this conclusion, because, as has been well said, he refers to science "with evident predilection. At one time it is arithmetic or geometry which must do him service in illustrating certain truths and relations; at another time it is physical and chemical laws, or facts of optics, or acoustics,

which he applies to illuminate moral and religious truths."¹ Thus, in the "Trialogus," he gives an account of the Ptolemaic system of the universe. In a sermon he illustrates and explains the text of St. James i. 23, by speaking of "perspective," or sight. "There are three manners of bodily sight—the first sight is even sight, as a man seeth a thing that is before him; the second sight is reflected when it is turned again by a mirror; the third sight is reflexed (*i.e.*, refracted), when it cometh by diverse means. Thus, men see a penny in a dish by pouring in of water, and else not; and by this sight men can see a very little thing at a great distance."²

We have a proof, not only in the case of Wiclif, but also in the case of Thomas Bradwardine, of whom I shall speak directly, distinguished as a mathematician and astronomer; of John Estwood, famous as an astronomer; and William Rede, afterwards Bishop of Chichester, a celebrated mathematician, both, about 1360, members of Merton College, that Oxford was, during the first half of the fourteenth century, distinguished for its zeal for the study of mathematical, astronomical, and physical science.³ We may conjecture that some disciples of Roger Bacon, who lived for some time in Oxford, and died in 1292, gave this impulse to the studies of Wiclif and his con-

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 138.

² "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. ii., pp. 299, 300 see also the references given by Lechler, vol. i., pp. 148, 149, to the Vienna MS.

³ Lewis, "Life of Wiclif," p. 2.

temporaries.¹ This distinguished man was remarkable for his zeal in mathematical and physical studies. He knew every branch of physical science — astronomy, optics, mechanics, and chemistry. At Paris his great abilities procured for him the title of the Wonderful Doctor. He had, in an unguarded moment, yielded to the solicitations of the celebrated Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, and had become a member of the Franciscan body. The Franciscans were closely watched by their rivals, the Dominicans. Feeling sure that the latter would triumph in the heresy of one who, both parties were persuaded, had a compact with the devil, because they imagined that from him alone he could have obtained his amazing knowledge and power to perform his wonderful works, and that they might bring him before the Inquisition, of which they were masters, they arraigned him before the General of their Order. The result was that he was cast into a dungeon for fifteen years, and was liberated from it only one year before his death. Such was the fate of a man who had anticipated some of the discoveries of a later age ; who had detected the error in the Julian year ; who, three centuries before the time, had proposed to correct the calendar by Papal authority ; who had discovered the principle of the telescope, the refraction of light, and the cause of the rainbow ; who had nearly invented gunpowder ; who had sought the philosopher's stone, and had endeavoured to transmute the baser metals

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 139.

into gold ; who had delivered wonderful predictions about mounting in the air without wings, and had spoken about wonderful carriages, travelling at an enormous speed without the aid of horses. The charge has been brought against his illustrious namesake, Lord Bacon, founded on a coincidence of thought and expression in the writings of both of them, that he had borrowed from him the principles of that science which has rendered his name illustrious. We are persuaded that this apparent plagiarism was no more than the sympathy of minds cast in the same mould, and working on the same subjects. We may certainly indulge the pleasing fancy that, through his disciples, he trained, by means of mathematical science, those wonderful powers of reasoning which not only in Wiclif's sermons, but also in his works, elaborated arguments, serving to show the unfounded claims of the Church of Rome on the undivided allegiance of Christendom.¹

Wiclif passed on from science to theology. We are satisfied that he devoted himself with ardour to the study of it, not because he hoped, by means of it, to rise to the highest dignities in Church or State, but because, as we learn occasionally from his writings, he wished to apply the whole force of his mind to the examination of the most important questions which can occupy the attention of a rational and immortal

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol. iii., p. 432 (note) ; Hallam's "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," vol. i., p. 155 ; and Milman's "History of Latin Christianity," vol. ix., pp. 153-159.

being. We have no certain evidence as to his teachers at Oxford. We cannot suppose that he attended the theological lectures delivered at Merton College by the celebrated Thomas Bradwardine, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; for about the time when Wiclif came to Oxford Bradwardine must have left the University to take up his abode in London in the princely residence of Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, and Chancellor to Edward III., who was a great lover of books and patron of learned men, and who wished to have his assistance in the arrangement of his library. We may, however, believe that his teaching had considerable influence upon Wiclif; for we find that though he could not accept all his dogmatic views, yet that he always speaks of him in terms of the highest commendation.¹ He had read, we may suppose, that remarkable work of Bradwardine against Pelagius, a folio of more than 900 pages, the result of his lectures at Oxford, which was received with unbounded applause by learned men throughout Christendom, and procured for him the title of Doctor Profundus. He must have learned from this work the great truth of the free grace of God as the only source of human salvation, which, as we shall see, he afterwards maintained, as well as the doctrine of predestination. We have in it the first intimation that, in addition to erroneous practice, of which the shameless profligacy of the Court of Avignon was at that time a witness to the nations, the Popes had been guilty of erroneous

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 89; and vol. ii., p. 60.

doctrine, and that they had corrupted the faith once delivered unto the saints. He labours to show that it is utterly impossible that the performance of any good actions can render it meet and equitable that God should bestow upon us saving grace, and that our works cannot prove our passport to glory, honour, and immortality. His mathematical skill enabled him to establish this position by an elaborate train of argument in which he was led to express strong views on the subject of predestination. He has always been a great favourite with deep thinkers, and especially with the Calvinistic divines of our Church. His views on the principal subject of his learned book are the same as those expressed in the thirteenth Article of our Church, that "works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."¹

Wiclif would also esteem Bradwardine on account of those saintly virtues for which he was pre-eminently distinguished. He would admire him on account of that union of contemplation and of action which was a distinguishing feature in his character. He would see him at the call of duty, leaving his beloved studies when he was employing

¹ Dean Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury," vol. iv., pp. 87-91.

his transcendent abilities in the examination of some abstruse question, in order that he might minister to the wants of the distressed and the perishing, or through active work promote the divine glory in the salvation of his ignorant and perishing fellow-creatures.¹ He might have had that noble example before him, when afterwards, during the last years of his life he was writing, one after another, those works which bear the impress of his genius, while he was engaged in the active discharge of his duties as a parish priest at Ludgarshall and Lutterworth, and was organising and sending forth that band of "poor priests," that holy brotherhood, whose object was to make the moral wilderness around them rejoice and blossom as the rose. He would also have traced his career through France, when Bradwardine accompanied Edward III. as his chaplain, from the naval victory of Sluys to the glorious field of Crecy; and he would have admired and sought to imitate that courage blended with gentleness, affection, and firmness, which led him to rebuke Edward for that vice which has left a dark stain upon his character, to allay the fierceness of his anger, and to moderate his transports when he was flushed with victory; and that saintliness which gave him so much influence with the army that it was generally said that it was owing as much to the prayers of the churchman as to the genius of the king that they had gained that victory which has shed an imperishable glory on the arms of our country. He would have

¹ Dean Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., p. 92.

admired also that Christian heroism, which led him, obedient to the call of duty, immediately after his consecration to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, to hasten to England, then stricken with the plague, that he might show the clergy by his own example, that they ought to minister to the sick and dying around them, and lift up before the sufferers the symbol of their redemption; and he would, with the nation, have been deeply grieved when he heard that the wise, the learned, the good, the gentle archbishop, whose archiepiscopate would, he might have hoped, have been fruitful in blessings to the Church, monarch, and people, had fallen a victim to the plague, and had been consigned to his last resting-place in the Cathedral Church of Canterbury.¹

As Bradwardine died in 1349, we may believe that these influences were at work upon the mind of Wiclif during his career as a student at Oxford. We may also suppose that he attended the lectures of the celebrated Richard Fitz Ralph, the Chancellor of the University, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, who was lecturing on theology at Oxford, about 1340. He cites very frequently the work which he wrote against the errors of the Arminians.² We find that he followed the course prescribed by the University, attending, first of all, lectures on the Bible, and afterwards lectures on the scholastic philosophy. He added to this knowledge an acquaintance with the civil and the canon law, which always in those days

¹ Dean Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury," vol. iv., pp. 97-110.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 76.

formed a very important part of the education of a scholar and divine, as well as the municipal laws and customs of his country. He also carefully read the primitive Christian writers, and chiefly four of the most distinguished fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory.¹ But to the scholastic philosophy he devoted himself with intense application. So great was his diligence, that he committed to memory many of the more intricate portions of Aristotle, of whom in connexion with this philosophy I shall speak directly.² He must have obtained a knowledge of the philosophy from the works at that time chiefly read at Oxford, the "Summa" of Thomas Aquinas, the writings of Bishop Robert Grosseteste, of Lincoln, and the works of Archbishop FitzRalph (Armacanus) against the errors of the Arminians.³ So great was the importance attached to this philosophy, that bachelors of theology of the lowest degree were allowed to give lectures on the Bible; whereas bachelors of the middle and highest degree, and doctors of Theology only were allowed to give lectures on the Sentences of Peter the Lombard. The latter would have thought it beneath their dignity to give lectures on Holy Scripture. "The graduate," says Roger Bacon, "who reads (or lectures on) the text of Scripture is compelled to give way to the reader of the Sentences, who everywhere enjoys honour or precedence. He who reads the Sentences has the choice of his

¹ Lewis's "Life of Wiclif," pp. 2, 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 143.

hour, and ample entertainment among the religious orders. He who reads the Bible is destitute of those advantages; and sues, like a mendicant, to the reader of the Sentences, for the use of such hour as it may please him to grant. He who reads the Sums of Divinity, is everywhere allowed to hold disputations, and is venerated as master; he who only reads the text is not permitted to dispute at all, *which is absurd.*"¹ Such is the language of Friar Bacon in the thirteenth century. That of John of Salisbury in the twelfth century is still stronger. He tells us that the scriptural teachers were not only rejected as philosophers, but unwillingly endured as clergymen—nay, were scarcely acknowledged to be men. They became objects of derision, and were termed the bullocks of Abraham or the asses of Balaam."² Wiclif, however, had the courage to disregard the prevailing disesteem in which the Scriptures were held, and associated the study of them so closely with the ardent pursuit of the scholastic philosophy, that he was distinguished among his contemporaries by the high and honourable title of the Evangelical Doctor.

He was the last giant among those schoolmen who have left the impress of their amazing genius on the theology of the age in which they lived. The tomes of scholastic philosophy have been well compared to the pyramids which excite the amazement of the

¹ Mosheim's "Eccl. Hist.," Cent. xii., Part ii. c. 3, n. 9.

Le Bas' "Life of Wiclif," p. 96, quoted from Turner's "History of England," vol. i., p. 508.

traveller, as their gigantic and massive forms rise before him from the sands of Egypt, when he thinks that they have been made for no conceivable purpose, and observes the enormous waste of power employed in the construction of them. The schoolmen, Albertus, Aquinas, Bonaventura, Ockham, have long since been consigned to oblivion. The dust on their ponderous tomes reminds us of grass growing in lonely and desolate courts in ruined cities, which once echoed the voice of pleasure. They bring before us a time when they were "the observed of all observers," and when multitudes at our Universities engaged in heated discussions on the questions brought forward in their pages, partly from the love of contention implanted in the human breast, partly from their desire of pushing their inquiries into mysterious questions of metaphysics or theology which surpass the comprehension of our limited faculties. We should study their works if we take pleasure in pugilistic exercises of reasoning, or the efforts of men of gigantic intellect.¹

We must, however, admit with Dr. Shirley that "they give evidence of a precision of thought and subtlety of analysis which may challenge comparison with the best works of the best ages of antiquity." They were constantly engaged in discussions on such

¹ For an account of the Scholastic Philosophy, see Dean Milman's "Latin Christianity," vol. ix., pp. 118-152; Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol. iii., pp. 426-432; and "Scholasticism," an excellent lecture before the University of Oxford, by the late Professor Shirley.

questions as the distinction between the Eternal and the Temporal, the Infinite and the Finite. They endeavoured to prove that, while there is nothing intermediate between the higher intelligence of men and the intelligence of God, there is an eternal distinction between them; and that the former cannot be said to be divine, though it issues from the latter. They are constantly producing the same eternal problems. They would separate the immaterial part of man from humanity and unite him with the Godhead; they would then bring down the Godhead into the world till the distinction disappears. They are constantly converting thoughts into things and things into thoughts; and deluding themselves with the imagination that the Finite can grasp Infinity. Unlike the Latin Fathers, from whom they borrowed their premises, as we may see on referring to the lectures of Peter the Lombard, the great scholastic manual at Oxford in the time of Wiclif, they did not dwell on the facts of faith, but on the mode of the Divine operations. For this reason Scholastic Theology would be a more correct expression than Scholastic Philosophy. The schoolmen availed themselves of the logic of Aristotle in the prosecution of their inquiries. When they adopted his philosophy also, a loud cry was raised by the champions of Orthodoxy, not because they had taken a heathen as their ally, but because they had obtained information about his views from the Arabian commentaries upon them. When, before the close of the thirteenth century, the genuine Aristotle was made

known through the Byzantine exiles, the Popes withdrew their opposition to the illustrious Grecian philosopher. They had gathered also from the works of the Fathers much philosophy marked with Platonic influences.

The wonder is that the age of chivalry, the age which produced our cathedrals, remarkable for their elaborate adornment, and the chaste beauty of their architecture, the age also of romance writers of poetry and song, should have been fertile also in men who took delight in the dry and abstract disquisitions which have just come before our notice. Our wonder is increased when we see them busy with a religion not taught by authority, and employing the aid of a heathen in their philosophical investigations. England is doubtless an instance of the truth of the assertion that all nations must pass through a philosophical training before they can obtain a high place in the republic of letters. These mental exercises were the cloud, small as a man's hand, the forerunner of the storm which was to shatter the imposing structure of Romanism. This prodigious waste of labour on subjects purely speculative was a sign that the mind was beginning to emancipate itself from its thralldom. It would not, indeed, altogether cast off its fetters; it set bounds to its investigations. Those gigantic intellects probably engaged in these useless disquisitions because they would not lay themselves open to the charge of heresy, or come into collision with the authority of the dominant Church. We can, how-

ever, see that this labour was not in vain ; for it served to keep alive, even in servitude itself, the desire for a more exalted freedom.

We have thus seen the course of preparation for his future work through which Wiclif must have passed during his career as a student at Oxford. He was, as I have already observed, the last distinguished man from that University whom the system brought to the front ; the worthy representative of such men as Duns Scotus, Ockham, and Grosseteste, who have shed a glory on the annals of scholasticism. We can easily see the disadvantage to which this training exposed him. His meaning is often enveloped in a cloud of metaphysical language, intelligible in his day, which it is now very difficult to penetrate. Thus he has become open to misconstruction and misrepresentation. This was, however, an evil of little importance when compared with the great advantages conferred by this system of training. We can see that as the foremost wrestler in the intellectual arena, the most distinguished champion of that scholastic philosophy which, at this time, reigned supreme in Oxford, he would have great influence with his contemporaries, when, first of all, he came forward to oppose the abuses and corruptions of the Papacy, and afterwards, when he laboured to show that the dogmas of the Church of Rome were condemned alike by reason and revelation.

Enough has already been said to show that this system would, by developing his intellectual powers, prepare him directly for his work as a Reformer. We

must remember, too, that the disputations between the professor and the candidate in the scholastic philosophy, already described, would bring into play those faculties of readiness, memory, and invention which are invaluable to the preacher or the public orator. As Professor Brewer observes¹ :—" Out of the ranks of the schoolmen came forth the most popular preachers, the most unceasing opponents of the Papacy. Under their training were educated the precursors of the Reformation, as well as the ablest of the Reformers themselves. The very men who, in later times, were launching the severest sarcasms against the schoolmen, had been trained to their new freedom and vigour of mind by men they had learned to despise. The unreservedness with which the schoolmen ranged through every region of divinity and metaphysics, led in turn to equal freedom of discussion, equal unreservedness in political discussion." Thus, then, the scholastic philosophy ruled for two centuries the intellect of those restless times, constantly improving its system, extending its influence, and drawing into its service some of the highest minds, including Wiclif's, which Christendom has ever produced. He was, however, before the end of his days, impressed with the conviction, generally fixed in men's minds in the following century, that other modes of thought must be adopted, for disputes had hitherto turned on points involving absurdity and contradiction, inscrutable by human comprehension.

¹ Preface to the "Monumenta Franciscana," or "Memorials of the Franciscans in England," in the Rolls Series, p. lix.

The schoolmen had not solved one problem, or added one truth to the domain of philosophy.

We might suppose that Wiclif's residence at Balliol had been continuous, if we had not been confronted with the entry on the Compotus of the Bursar in 1356, that John Wiclif was steward of the week at Merton, which implies, as Professor Shirley observes, that he was a Fellow of considerable standing.¹ A catalogue of the Fellows of Merton, written by one T. Roberts, who died in 1446, on the back side of antiquated parchment rolls, has been discovered, from which it appears that Wiclif was a Fellow in the thirty-third year of Edward III.² Professor Shirley, imagining that it was most unlikely that the Fellows of Balliol would elect a Fellow of another college to the Mastership, has attempted to prove that the reference here is to another John Wiclif.³ Presumptive evidence against that view would be that Middleworth, who, it appears from the rolls, was with him at Merton, was afterwards with him at Queen's, and that Aston, Brightwell, James, and Rugge, also given in them, were leaders of the Lollard movement, and followers of Wiclif. Dr. Lorimer also thinks that Wiclif was always a member of Balliol.⁴ The reason given is the feud between the northern and southern "nations" in the University. It is a well-known fact that the universities of Europe in the Middle Ages,

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 514.

² *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1877, p. 127.

³ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. 513-528.

⁴ Lorimer's note on Lechler, vol. i., pp. 185-190.

divided themselves into nations, according to the countries to which their different members belonged. In Oxford, however, there were only two such nations, the northern and southern (*Boreales et Australes*). The first included the Scots, the second the Irish and the Welsh. Each nation had its President, with the title of Procurator, from which the word Proctor derives its origin.¹ So fierce was the antagonism between these two parties, that they occasionally disturbed the public peace by their unseemly violence. Wood informs us that on one occasion, on the election of a Chancellor, the southern party forced their way into St. Mary's Church, kicking, and cudgelling, and severely wounding those of the northern party opposed to the Chancellor, from Merton College, whom the former had selected.² Merton and Balliol were the headquarters of these two great antagonistic factions during the fourteenth century. We have a singular collateral confirmation of the claim of Balliol to be considered the headquarters of the northern interest in the University, in the fact that the Warden of Durham College, Oxford, appointed by the Prior of the monastery of Durham, had an effective voice in the confirmation of the election or removal of the Master of Balliol, and in the confirmation of all Fellows who were elected to certain theological fellowships. Durham college was founded by Edward III., in fulfilment of a vow made on the eve of his battle with the Scots at Halidon Hill, near Berwick. He

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., pp. 78, 79.

² Wood's "History and Antiquities of Oxford," vol. i., p. 448.

acted under the advice of his former tutor, Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, and Chancellor of the Kingdom, whose object was to strengthen the interest of north-country scholars in the University. The consent of Balliol College to this unusual arrangement, apparently very objectionable, designed to give a prestige to the younger institution, affords evidence of the claim above referred to, and of the zeal of that ancient House in behalf of the north-country interest in the University.

Dr. Lorimer has argued that, on account of this antagonism, it was most unlikely that a Balliol man could obtain admission to Merton College.¹ We must, however, remember that some very eminent men, including Ockham and Bradwardine,² who were distinguished for their knowledge of scholastic philosophy, had been members of Merton. Ockham was called Doctor Singularis, and had an European reputation. Now Wiclif, after a residence of some time in the University, had displayed that love of learning, that pre-eminent ability, and that dialectic skill, which have rendered his name illustrious. We have seen the ardour with which the study of the Scholastic Philosophy was prosecuted. Great honours were conferred on the schoolmen. A general returning, crowned with laurels, from some well-fought battlefield, was not received with greater acclamations than the man who had often come off victorious from the combats in the schools, that mimic battle-ground. We

¹ Lechler's "Life," note by Lorimer, vol. i., pp. 189, 190.
Lewis, p. 2.

can easily understand, therefore, that the Fellows of Merton would be glad to add Wiclif to the list of their distinguished members, even though he belonged to a rival and opposed college, and that the Fellows of Balliol would be glad to elect him to a fellowship if they had not elected him before he left them for Merton, in order that, in accordance with the requirements not only of the original statutes of Devorguilla, the widow of Sir John de Balliol, passed in 1282, but also of Sir Philip de Somerville, added in 1340 to those of Devorguilla, they might elect him to the Mastership.¹ The election of such a man would shed a lustre on the respective colleges. We find, in fact, from Anthony Wood that, even in the case of far less distinguished men than Wiclif, the Fellows of Balliol did not confine themselves to their own college. Of the thirty-three Masters from 1282 to 1637, only two are stated to have been members of Balliol. Seven were of other colleges, and twenty-four have no college appended to their names. We may assert that, as Wood gives all ascertainable information, they were members of no college.²

We cannot indeed suppose with Dr. Lechler that Wiclif had been obliged to leave Balliol for Merton,

¹ Lechler, v. i., p. 186, Lorimer's note. The statutes of De Somerville provided that nothing was to be done contrary to the provisions of the former statutes. We find, indeed, in the new statutes no restriction as to the choice of a Master. The reason, however, was that this provision had been clearly made in the fundamental statutes.

² Wood's "History of the Antiquities of the Colleges and Halls in Oxford," pp. 81-84.

because, on account of the poverty of the college, which prevented the students from prosecuting their studies, and obliged them to have recourse to trade for the sake of a living, a rule had been made that every one belonging to the foundation should leave as soon as he had obtained his Arts Degree; for we learn that Sir W. Felton's benefaction of the church at Abbotsley became available in 1341, and not in 1361, as Lechler supposes, and that Sir Philip de Somerville had, in the same year, when Wiclif must have been in the middle of his career as a student, given to the master and fellows the church of Micklebenton.¹ The design of these endowments was to provide that, in future, the members of the college might live in the college as before, and prosecute their studies after they had become masters and doctors. The new joint endowments increased the number of scholars or fellows from sixteen to twenty-two, and added a half to the weekly allowances. While we differ from Lechler on this point, we must maintain that, for some unknown reason, which we may conjecture to have been that it was the most distinguished academical institution of the day, and the home, as we have seen, of Ockham and Bradwardine, Wiclif sought admission to Merton, thus conferring as well upon that college as upon Balliol, the honour of a connexion with the illustrious leader of the noble band of Reformers before the Reformation.

Wiclif, after the completion of his academical

¹ Lechler, v. i., p. 156, and Lorimer's note, p. 190.

course, must have remained at Oxford, engaged in the unostentatious discharge of his University duties ; for we cannot discover from any public record that he came forward prominently on the world's highway. From several passages in his writings we may gather that, as a Regent Master of Arts, he gave courses of lectures with zeal and success on logic and philosophy. This was practically the chief value of the degree, that it conferred the right of lecturing, and therefore of receiving money for lectures at Oxford.¹ He would also have shown that administrative ability as Fellow of Merton, which must have led to his appointment to the Mastership of Balliol at least as early as 1360. The year assigned hitherto has been 1361, for three documents, dated 7th, 8th, and 9th of April in that year, state that Wiclif, as Master, takes possession of the incumbency of Abbotsley, in the county of Huntingdon, which had been incorporated with the foundation ;² but we learn from Mr. Rileys' report to the royal commission on historical manuscripts, in 1874, that Wiclif's name, as Master of the Hall, occurs in a Latin memorandum among the archives, having reference to a suit brought against the college in the matter of some house property in London, in the thirty-fourth year of the reign of King Edward III.—*i.e.*, in the year 1360.³ He could not have been appointed long before that time, for two Masters are mentioned between 1356 and the date

¹ Anstey's "Munimenta Academica," Part i., p. lxxxix.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 158.

³ Lorimer's note to Lechler, vol. i., p. 186.

just referred to. He must have resigned this Mastership in 1361 on his appointment by the college to the living of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, nine miles north-north-west of Lincoln, for we find from the account-books of Queen's College that, in 1363-1365, he paid rent for apartments in the college. We have no record of his pastoral work in connexion with this parish. We may, however, come to the conclusion that he did not reside continuously in it, and that his work at the University was not materially interrupted; for we ascertain from an entry in the episcopal register at Lincoln in 1368, that the bishop gave him leave of absence from his parish for two years that he might devote himself to his studies at Oxford.¹ This leave would probably have been given in former years. Perhaps a part of that work was the preparation of his Philosophical Treatises. These, which have not yet been printed, had, as we know, an influence on the Bohemian movement.² We know also that, as Bachelor of Theology of the lower degree, he would, as I have stated, deliver lectures on Holy Scripture. He would afterwards, as Bachelor of Theology of the higher degree, be able to lecture on the Sentences. We may gather from his subsequent writings that he must have been engaged at Oxford in a laborious examination of the records of heavenly truth, and we may

¹ Lechler, p. 182, n. 7. In his Tract, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefice" (Matthew, p. 244, 250), he states that a curate cannot get leave of absence to study God's law without payment. Perhaps, as Mr. Matthew says, he had been obliged to buy leave of absence from Fillingham.

² Wratislaw's "John Hus," S.P.C.K., p. 87.

conclude that he must have been impressed with a deeper conviction that others like himself ought to have the opportunity given to them of knowing experimentally the life-giving power of those words of wisdom which are able to make all instructed in them "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

We could have wished that we had more to say about this portion of his life; that we could enliven our narrative with a few anecdotes; that we could speak of the trials which he endured and the difficulties which he encountered; that we could exhibit him in the daily intercourse of life in the streets and colleges of Oxford. But over these matters time has drawn an impenetrable veil. A few dates, and the inferences drawn from them, the result of a painful examination of parchment rolls, constitute all the information which we can obtain respecting him. Possibly we may know more about this and the early part of his life, when all his Latin works are examined. But as far as we know at present, his writings contain many allusions to his public life, but very few to his private life. We must, therefore, endeavour in another way, through conjecture, to obtain our information about him during this portion of his career.

A careful examination of the history of Oxford will enable us to discover certain events and influences which may have aided in the formation of his character, and in the development of his principles. We shall employ the same method of investigation as

in the case of his studies. One of those events is that terrible pestilence called the Black Death, which, having pursued its desolating march over Asia, extended its ravages to England. Wrapped in putrid vapours it walked silently through the length and breadth of the lands which it visited, leaving sad memorials of its destructive progress behind it in the lifeless forms of thousands of their miserable inhabitants. It was so contagious that the breath, the clothes of the sick, and every spot which they touched were means of propagating the disease. The angel of destruction was supposed to have gone forth to prepare men for the second coming of Christ. A calculation has been made that it swept away one-fourth of the population of Europe, and one-half of the population of England.

It made its first appearance in England at Dorchester in August, 1348, and came to Oxford in 1349. So great was the mortality that, as Wood informs us, sixteen bodies in a day were carried to one churchyard.¹ We cannot doubt that this visitation produced a deep impression on the mind of Wiclif; that he may have thought that the angel of destruction had gone forth on his mission of vengeance in order to prepare the world for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that it led him to resolve to devote all his powers to his Redeemer's service. We cannot, however, come to this conclusion from a little work called the "Last Age of the Church," formerly attributed to him, the

¹ Wood's "History of Oxford," vol. i., p. 448.

writer of which, whose mind had been solemnized by the plague, anticipated the immediate appearance of Christ to execute judgment; for, to use the words of Professor Shirley, "The frequent quotations from the prophecies, real or spurious, of the Abbot Joachim, and the fact that the abuses referred to in the tract are exclusively those of the endowed clergy, seem to point to a Franciscan monk as the probable author. To print it," the writer adds, "was to condemn it."¹ The work is, in fact, so feeble that it could not have been the production of the master-mind in the University of Oxford. We can have no doubt, also, as to the effect which the plague produced upon others; that it induced, in many cases, a habit of serious reflection; and thus aided Wiclif in the schemes which had for their object the regeneration of human society.

We believe, also, with Dean Hook,² that it became the means of supplying him with that agency which, as we shall see hereafter, he employed to propagate his opinions through the length and breadth of the land. Men had stood by the bedside of the partner of their cares and their sorrows; they had seen the black spot appearing on a countenance which once beamed with beauty and intelligence; and they had afterwards bent in speechless anguish over the form of the departed one, and almost wished themselves at the end of their journey through the wilderness. But when the loved form had been buried out of their

¹ "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," p. xiii., n. 4.

² "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., pp. 128, 129.

sight, their affliction produced a beneficial effect, and they resolved as priests to devote themselves to the more immediate service of their Maker. The bishops were very willing to ordain them that they might fill up the gaps which death had made in the ranks of the clergy. They were entirely destitute of learning, and could not, therefore, expect to rise in the Church; they were full of Christian zeal; they had a great sympathy with the poor; and were just able to read what Wiclif had written, to the destitute and afflicted around them. They were thus "a body prepared to receive in due time the teaching of Wiclif and his followers," and to convey the message of eternal life to the guilty and rebellious inhabitants of this district of God's empire.

But other events and influences at Oxford must have aided in preparing the way for his work, and in developing his character. Oxford lived in a din of perpetual warfare. Storms, occasional elsewhere, were here the perpetual atmosphere.¹ There was first of all the strife of centuries between the University and City of Oxford, which culminated in Wiclif's time in the "great conflict" on St. Scholastica's Day, February 10th, 1355. The assault of the town upon the University was evidently premeditated. The citizens thought that they should have the members at a disadvantage, as the plague had greatly reduced the number of the students. They were led on by the mayor, John de Bereford, one of those turbulent men whom the wars of Edward III. had converted

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 71.

into skilled soldiers. As we read the account in the graphic pages of Wood,¹ we seem to have before us that terrible massacre of Cawnpore, which sent a thrill of horror through the minds of the inhabitants of England.

A quarrel arose between some scholars and the host of a tavern which belonged to Bereford. The scholars pronounced the wine to be bad ; and as the host only gave them a sharp answer, they threw the wine and flask at his head. He complained bitterly to John Bereford and others, who told him that he ought not to submit to the affront. Speedily the town-bell rang from St. Martin's church ; armed citizens assembled, and fell on the scholars, who were walking unarmed through the streets. The Chancellor endeavoured in vain to persuade the citizens to keep the peace. At last, seeing the danger to which the scholars were exposed, he directed the bell of St. Mary's to sound the alarm, and call the scholars to arms. They had withdrawn from the fray, in the first instance, in obedience to the command of the Chancellor ; but they now returned, and offered so stout an opposition as to keep their adversaries in check till the evening. In the morning, the Chancellor's efforts at pacification were frustrated by the determined hostility of the town. The scholars were, therefore, obliged to stand on their defence. They seized the gates of the town to prevent the entrance of the country people, and fought bravely

¹ Wood's "History," vol. i., pp. 456-469.

throughout the day. But towards evening about 2,000 armed countrymen burned down the west gate, and forced their way in, headed by a black banner, with loud shouts of murder and plunder. The scholars, borne down by this torrent, fled into the open country or into their private rooms. But the mob, having lost all control over themselves, and hurried away by their own evil passions, with hideous shouts, stormed most of the colleges and halls, forcing them open with iron bars. Those who could not escape were killed, wounded, thrown into the sinks and sewers, or dragged away to prison. Crucifixes and church ornaments were demolished; students, shaven as monks, were treated with savage cruelty; the scalp was torn off the head of some of them. The rioters attacked and slaughtered several who had fled for refuge to the sacred elements which the priests were carrying in solemn procession through the town in the hope of calming the angry passions of the multitude. The townsmen now remained masters of the field. Forty scholars are mentioned by name as having been killed in the fray; but these, no doubt, are only a small portion of those who suffered. Such was the end of that terrible conflict which, though at first disastrous to the University, at length ended in the establishment of it as a preponderating authority, for the Chancellor was invested with control over the town police, and all the jurisdiction, civil or military, connected with it.¹ We may suppose that Wiclif

¹ Huber's "English Universities," p. 145. The oath to respect the privileges of the University was taken by the in-

was one of those who, as we are told by Wood, locked within Merton College, the only college from which the students had not fled, passed the night in prayer for these outcasts, and for deliverance from the dangers by which he was surrounded. As the frantic yells of those monsters in human shape, mingled with the groans of the dying, fell on his ear, there would be awakened in his mind an earnest desire to terminate this fratricidal contest, and to heal the bleeding wounds of human society.

I have already spoken of the contests between the northern and southern factions in the University. The bloody fights in the streets do not represent mere frays, or disputes of young men after a carouse, but important religious or political principles. They are the continued vibration of powerful springs, elsewhere set in motion.¹ We have in Wood a very significant monkish verse :—

“ Thus old story says,
From our Oxford frays,
After few months and days,
All England's in a blaze.”

The northern party, in Henry III.'s reign, had supported the barons and people in their struggle with him for popular rights, and for deliverance from

coming mayor from 1355 till a few years ago. The mayor, up to the middle of this century, presented to the Vice-Chancellor at St. Mary's 63 silver pennies in memory of the number, probably greater, slain in this fray. The town-and-gown fights arose from these conflicts.

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 85; and Wood, vol. i., p. 258.

the extortions of the Papacy ; while the southern party arrayed themselves beneath the banner of the Sovereign.¹ The former had in the civil war migrated to Northampton, leaving Oxford to the southern party, and distinguished themselves so much by their bravery, that the king, on the capture of the city, was with difficulty dissuaded from putting them to death.² We find that generally the resistance to the Papacy came from the northern party, including the Scotch ; while the southern English, with the Welsh and Irish, were its supporters. The northern party had, at the present time, identified itself with that party which was overthrown when Simon de Montfort, extolled as a hero, saint, and martyr, as the man who had shown more bravery than his fellows in behalf of the civil and religious immunities of the English people, fell on the field of Evesham. Wiclif, as a northernman, had made common cause with the northern party, which had become, in his time, as Wood says, the weakest in the University ; and had thus become animated with that spirit which led him to stand forward afterwards in defence of civil and religious liberty and independence.³

I must glance at other parties which were adding to the turmoil in Oxford. The contest between the

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 87, 99, 102.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 96.

³ Thomas Walsingham, the Chronicler of St. Alban's, thus speaks of Wiclif in 1377 : — "About this time there rose at Oxford a certain man of the northern nation, called Master John Wiclif."

Nominalists and Realists rose to their full vigour in the first half of the fourteenth century. Wood speaks of them as "clashing controversies in disputations and writing." He informs us that those of the north held with Scotus, and those of the south with Ockham, and adds that "their disputations were so violent, that the peace of the University was not a little disturbed."¹ Wiclif was a north countryman, and a Realist. At this time Realism and the Reformation found favour chiefly with the northern party. We find also the officers of the University struggling with those of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of the diocese. Faculty was arrayed against Faculty, as Law against Medicine; the Seculars against the Regulars, and especially against the Friars, with whom for a century after their introduction there was a constant struggle. This wild tumultuous life was not without its advantages. These contests would serve to impress the students with the conviction that they had rights and privileges to guard, and would teach them to do battle for principles. Doubtless, Wiclif, as he wrangled in the Schools with the renowned teachers of theology and philosophy, would find in the contest a stimulus to perseverance in the examination of the most important questions which can occupy the attention of a being preparing for immortality.

We now come to the question of Wiclif's appointment to the Wardenship of Canterbury Hall. The

¹ Wood, A.D. 1343; Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., p. 85.

following was, up to the year 1841, universally considered to be the correct version of the circumstances relating to the matter. Simon Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury, founded a Hall which was to bear the name of the Archiepiscopal See. He was not a man of great ability, and has not left his mark on the age; but he evinced by this establishment an anxious desire to train those who would be instrumental in removing the abuses of the ecclesiastical system. In an application which he made to Edward III. for his consent to the establishment of the Hall, and to the alienation of the living of Pageham, in Sussex, to the support of the institution, he showed that he designed that monks and secular clergy should be members of the foundation. In a royal edict dated 20th October, 1361, Edward III. gave his consent to the proposal.¹ In April, 1363, we have the charter of foundation, and the gift of the manor of Woodford. The Hall was to be for twelve students. In March, 1364, Islip appointed Woodhall to be the Warden, one of the three, whom, as it appears from the deed of nomination, he asked the prior and church of Canterbury to recommend to him for that office. It does not, however, appear that in the statutes framed after the application to Edward, he designed that three monks should be members of the foundation;² for in the gift of the manor of Woodford, he does not say that some of the places were to be filled by

¹ Lewis's "Life," No. 1, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, No. 4, p. 290.

them. But, as a matter of fact, three were appointed from the Benedictine monastery of Canterbury.

The consequence of this association of Seculars and Regulars might have been foreseen. A strife between the two parties began immediately. This, in fact, was one of the incidents in that long contention which, beginning with the celebrated Dunstan, has left its impress on the history of the middle ages. Woodhall, who was a man of violent temper, aggravated the strife. Islip, seeing that the contention was injuring his institution, dismissed Woodhall and the three Canterbury monks, and appointed in December, 1365, in his place, Wiclif as Warden, and Middleworth, Bengier, and Selby as Fellows. He had evidently, under the power which he had reserved to himself, framed new statutes since his first application to Edward III.¹ Islip died five months after this appointment; and was succeeded by Simon Langham. The latter having been a monk, and cherishing a strong monastic spirit, after he was enthroned in March, 1367, dismissed Wiclif, with the secular members, and appointed Redingate as Warden. He was succeeded in three weeks by Woodhall.²

Wiclif immediately appealed to the Pope, Urban V. This suit seems to have lingered, as suits always do. The Pope appointed Cardinal Adrian in July, 1369, to settle the matter. He had power to remove,

¹ Wiclif ("De Ecclesia," 16) writes that Islip had appointed that secular clerics alone should study in the college. He refers to the altered statutes.

² Lewis, No. 8, p. 298.

if he thought fit, the secular clerks, and to make the college one of seculars or monks exclusively. As Simon Langham had, before this time, resigned the See of Canterbury, having become a Cardinal, and was now settled at Avignon, there could be no doubt as to the result. He would bring all his influence to bear to secure a judgment in favour of the monks. Accordingly we find that Adrian's judgment in May, 1370, was that the seculars should be dismissed, and that the monks should be settled in the college. The Pope confirmed the judgment. Edward III., on the payment of 200 marks by the Prior and Convent of Canterbury, assented to the decree, thus confirming, in the fullest manner, Wiclif's charge that simony had a part in the matter. We gather, however, from the king's decree of April 8, 1372, that it was clearly his idea that, on the whole, Wiclif was in the right, and the monks in the wrong; for the last reconstitution is declared to be in direct opposition to our licence, whereas the first is described as being beyond or in excess of our licence.¹

The distinguished predecessor of the Reformers has been supposed for many centuries to have been the prominent person in these transactions. But in 1841, Mr. Courthope made the discovery that a John Wycliffe was the vicar of Mayfield, in Sussex, from 1361 to 1380.² Now, as it was quite certain that the Reformer was never vicar of Mayfield, and that the vicar of Mayfield was never Master of

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 178.

² See the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1841.

Balliol, the inquiry became natural whether there might not have been a confusion between the two men, and whether the vicar might not have been the Fellow of Merton and the Warden of Canterbury Hall. A controversy on the subject, in which great learning and research have been shown, has been carried on for some time, with an utter absence of that bitterness of spirit, often a distinguishing feature in controversies of this description. I have already given reasons for the conclusion that our Wiclif was Fellow of Merton. With regard to Canterbury Hall, it seems that, even before the evidence, to be referred to directly, was discovered, which seems to set the question at rest for ever, Professor Shirley and others might have seen that there was no reason for disturbing the ancient belief.¹ The argument that the name of the Reformer is spelt in a different manner from that of the parish priest and of the Warden, ought not to have been used in the matter, on account of the great uncertainty of mediæval orthography. There are twenty-eight varieties of spelling the great Reformer's name. Prebendary Wilkinson, in an admirable article in the "Church Quarterly Review," on the two John Wiclifs, has used the same argument to show that our Wiclif must have been Warden of the Hall.² Again, Islip's appointment of John Wycliffe to the living of Mayfield, and the knowledge of him gained during his residence at

¹ Dr. Shirley has written a long note on the two John Wiclifs in "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," pp. 513-528.

² *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1877, pp. 121-122.

his favourite palace at Mayfield, should have been taken in close connexion with the laudatory terms in which he speaks of the person whom he appointed to be Warden. He not only speaks of his "praiseworthy life, and honourable conversation," but he also describes him as "super-eminent in literary acquirements."¹ Now this language might apply to the most distinguished schoolman at Oxford since the days of Ockham; but it could hardly have been used in regard to the vicar of Mayfield, who would probably have remained in obscurity, with other undistinguished men in the Canterbury registers, if he had not been rescued from it by the coincidence of an apparent confusion with the great predecessor of the Reformers. We may observe also that Islip may well be supposed to have had an intimate knowledge of him as well as of the parish priest of Mayfield, because he had been a member of Merton College, and because, as we shall see in the next chapter, his fame had at this time travelled beyond the University.

The first evidence against the assertion that our Wiclif was not Warden of Canterbury Hall, is that of Wodeford, who in a course of theological lectures, entitled, "Seventy-two Questions on the Sacrament of the Altar," says,— "This madness of his (Wiclif's) against the religious was bred of depravity. For before his expulsion by the endowed and dignified religious from the Hall of the monks of Canterbury, he made no attack of any consequence

¹ Wood's "History and Antiquities of Oxford," vol. i., p. 184; Lewis's "Life," p. 290.

against the endowed religious.”¹ The date given by Professor Shirley for these lectures is 1381, on the ground that they were written shortly after Wiclif’s confession on the sacrament of the altar (May 10, 1381), of which I shall speak in Chapter VIII., and before the condemnation of his conclusions in 1382.² This evidence ought to have great weight because it is incidental. Wodeford refers to it as a well known fact, designed to show the connexion between it and Wiclif’s opposition to the religious. Dr. Shirley has attempted to weaken its force by saying Wodeford could not have had personal knowledge of him; for as his earliest work was written in 1390, and his latest in 1433, he must have been a mere boy, when, 61 years before, the dispute about Canterbury Hall was closed.³ The fact, however, is that, as Prebendary Wilkinson has shown in the article above referred to, he is here confusing Wodeford with another person.⁴ Besides, it is evident from what Wiclif says of him in the “De Civili Dominio,” written between 1378 and 1383, that Wodeford was not likely to forget anything relating to him, as he was in habits of intimacy with him. “I have learned,” he writes, “in different degrees and acts of the schools, from Doctor Master William Wodeford’s temperate exercise, many noteworthy truths.”⁵

¹ “Fasciculi Zizaniorum,” p. 517.

² *Ibid.*, p. 517, n. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 523, 524.

⁴ *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1877, pp. 137, 138.

⁵ Lechler’s “Life,” vol. i., p. 183, n. 13.

But the most important evidence is that which is derived from the "*Chronicon Angliæ*," printed in the series brought out under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, from a manuscript of the Harleian Collection, which has hitherto escaped the notice of historians. This was only partially known from the fragment of a translation of it, made in the sixteenth century, published in the "*Archæologia*," (xxii. p. 253). "It contains," says its discoverer and editor, Mr. Thompson, of the British Museum, "an important detailed history of the close of Edward III.'s, and the beginning of Richard II.'s reign, which is now printed in its original shape for the first time, and has hitherto been considered lost. The former existence of a Latin original for the translation used by John Stow in his chronicle of England (the translation just referred to) has been generally admitted by historians. The only person who has thrown any doubt upon it is the late Professor Shirley, in his edition of the '*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*.' Mr. Shirley rejects its testimony on the ground of its being a compilation of the sixteenth century, while admitting, however, that the author had before him one, or perhaps two, contemporary authorities, which he has indolently interwoven into his narrative, without changing one even of those expressions which most clearly reflect the image of passing events."¹ But if he were alive he must admit the authority of the original Latin text of the "*Chronicon Angliæ*," which

¹ "*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*," pp. 521, 522; Note by Lorimer in Lechler's "*Life*," vol. i., pp. 191, 192.

is undoubtedly the work of a contemporary historian. His testimony to the Reformer's connexion with Canterbury Hall is the following:—"The Duke (referring to John of Gaunt) had taken to his party a certain false theologian, a real fighter against God, who for many years in the Schools, in all his acts, had opposed the Church, *because he was justly deprived by the Archbishop of Canterbury of a certain benefice in the University of Oxford, of which he was unjustly the incumbent.*"¹

The opinion against which I have been arguing may, therefore, be rejected as contrary to evidence. I have been particular in explaining the matter, because that opinion has been supported by distinguished authority. "Canterbury Hall," writes Dean Hook, "has a place in history, from its supposed connexion with the great Reformer, John Wiclif, a notion which is now exploded." He adds in a note, "I assume it as a fact now admitted by all who have examined the subject, that the Warden of Canterbury Hall is a person distinct from the great Reformer." The venerable author was glad that he could, as he thought, disprove the charge against him, by means of Dr. Shirley's note on the two John Wiclifs. "It frees," he writes, "the Reformer from the suspicion that his violence against Rome originated in personal feelings."² This charge has been often made by his adversaries from the fourteenth century. Lingard, who was full of animosity against

¹ "Chronicon Angliæ," p. 115.

² Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., p. 158.

him, and who always perverts history so far as he is concerned, ascribes to this ejection "those feelings of resentment, and those bitter and envenomed invectives with which he afterwards assailed the Court of Rome as well as the monastic orders." I think that far too much importance has been attached to this charge. We shall find in the following history that his changes of opinion were the result of honest and conscientious conviction. The light which had dawned upon his mind continued slowly and steadily increasing in brightness. Prebendary Wilkinson, in the article just referred to, has made some just observations on this point. "It is no discredit to a man," he says, "that he finds out slowly, by personal experience, the defects of the system under which he lives, and as he finds them out, sets himself to amend them. Such conduct is not a proof of small personal resentment, but rather of the truest political wisdom. If his actions are wise and moderate, and his teaching reasonable, serious, and straightforward, the charge of personal motives, and personal bitterness falls harmless to the ground."¹

Wiclif's ejection from Canterbury Hall marks a distinct era in his life. He had already, as we learn from the rolls, commenced the practice of residing in hired rooms at Queen's College, in 1363, 1364 and 1364, 1365.² In 1365-1367, he would have resided at Canterbury Hall. We cannot tell whether or not, in the last period just referred to, he took his

¹ *Church Quarterly Review* for October, 1877, p. 126.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 515.

highest degree, that of Doctor in the Theological Faculty. Professor Shirley, indeed, thinks that he can make it probable that he took the degree in 1363.¹ Dr. Lechler, however, has adduced evidence to show that we can only say that some time between 1365 and 1374 Wiclif became Doctor of Theology.² He thus became Professor of Theology, by which title we are not to understand that he was appointed to a Professor's chair. This statement would be an anachronism, as no Professor, in the modern sense of the word, was appointed in any University till 1430. The title of Professor of Theology given to him, simply denoted that he might, if he pleased, open a hall, and give lectures to as many as chose to become his pupils. As Professor in this sense, he influenced the religious views of the students at Oxford, and gave those lectures contained in his "Trialogus," including those on Transubstantiation, which, as we shall see in a future chapter, may be said to have been the beginning of the doctrinal Reformation in England.

We cannot find that he was at Queen's more than twice after 1367—in 1375 and 1380. We do not indeed say that he was not at Oxford, because we cannot trace him at this college. He was there, as we shall see, in 1381 and 1382. We may say, however, that he was not so much there as before, because he was employed on national matters of some importance, which rendered necessary long periods of absence from the University. After his ejection he became a

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. xvi., xvii.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 181.

citizen of the world.¹ He had made a reputation in the Schools second to none of his contemporaries. But if he had confined his attention to subjects of this kind, he would have been as little remembered as Marsilius of Padua, or John of Ganduno, and other men of the same class, distinguished in their day, whose names have long since been consigned to oblivion. But Wiclif did not wish to lay up his talent in a napkin, nor bury it in the earth. He had sharpened his weapons at Oxford, and had become skilled in the use of them. He had undergone a long preparation at Oxford for that great enterprise which, as events showed, was committed to his charge. He heard a voice summoning him to go forth on the world's highway, and work for God in the midst of a sinful generation. The next ten or twelve years may be called the political period of his life. It was, however, a stepping-stone to that high stage of his work in the last six years of his life, during which he endeavoured to reform the dogmas of the Papacy, and so to prepare the way for that Reformation which has been a source of blessing to many generations of our fellow-countrymen.

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor Montagu Burrows, pp. 157, 158.

CHAPTER III.

WICLIF AS A POLITICIAN.

1366-1378.

Wiclif becomes a politician.—His knowledge of English history.—Circumstances which led him to bring forward his theory of Dominion founded in grace.—Explanation of it.—Part of the reign of Edward III. very glorious.—The Pope revives the claim of homage and tribute from England.—Edward lays it before Parliament, which resolves that it ought to be resisted.—Wiclif challenged to defend the resolution.—His reply.—Observations upon it.—Wiclif not a Member of Parliament.—Decline of the prosperity of England.—Taxation of clergy.—Wiclif approves of it.—Proposal to exclude ecclesiastics from offices of State.—Wiclif's paper against the papal collector in England.—Wiclif a Commissioner at Bruges.—Explanation of the religious and political complications of this period.—The Good Parliament.—Wiclif summoned by John of Gaunt to London.—Cited by Bishop Courtenay to appear before the Archbishop at St. Paul's.—His popularity as a preacher in London.—Protected by John of Gaunt.—His appearance at St. Paul's, and the tumult which followed.—The interest in the matter partly political.—The Pope issues Bulls against Wiclif.—Delay in the publication of them.—Question, whether the treasure of the kingdom might not be detained, referred to Wiclif.—His answer.—Bulls at length issued.—The Bull received with anger at Oxford.—Wiclif appears at Lambeth before the papal delegates.—Is dismissed.—His conduct considered.—His views on endowments.—The trial at Lambeth an era in his life.—End of political period,

It has been a common idea, until the present time, that, as Minerva issued forth armed from the head

of Jupiter, so Wiclif stands before us, throughout his public life, a finished man, armed at all points for his conflict with the Papacy. An examination of his "Trialogus," but especially of his unpublished writings, will enable us to see that this is a great misconception, and that he must have passed through different changes of opinion during his memorable career. We are now surprised to see the quiet student of Oxford, on a sudden, embarking on the stormy sea of politics. A Church historian has blamed him for taking this course when he says, "Politics was the rock on which he split."¹ But, as we shall see, this was only one step in his progressive development. Afterwards he concentrated his energies on an attack upon the doctrines of the Church of Rome. Besides, he was perfectly justified in taking this course. He was not busying himself with matters belonging to the domain of worldly politics. His object was to deliver his native country from the exactions and tyranny of her great spiritual oppressor.

If we are right in our assertion that the party fights at Oxford between the northern and southern nations, had a deeper meaning than the world commonly suppose, we should say that here we have the germ of the patriotic ardour, nourished by them, which led him, in 1366, to come forward and to do battle with the satellites of Rome. That ardour breathes and burns in many passages of his unpublished works among the Vienna manuscripts, espe-

¹ Milner's "Church History," vol. iv., p. 122.

cially in his works "De Civili Dominio" and "De Ecclesia." We shall be able fully to illustrate the truth of that assertion, when we have them and his other great works, still unprinted, before us; meanwhile, we fully accept Dr. Lechler's statement on the subject.¹ We learn, also, from that author's "Life of Wiclif," that he often recalls important events in English history; that he was quite familiar with the different invasions of England by "Britons, Saxons, and Normans;" that he often speaks of Augustine, the "Apostle of the English," as he calls him in one place; that he touches on our kings also, as Edward the Confessor and John; that he refers to the later archbishops of Canterbury, especially to Thomas à Becket; and that he often mentions Magna Charta as the palladium of our liberties, to which monarch and nobles must render absolute obedience. We shall find many proofs that Lewis was quite right when he stated that Wiclif had made not only the Canon and Roman law, but, also, the laws of England the subject of his special study.² We shall see, also, that he does not take the interest of a mere student in these subjects, but of one who was full of zeal for the crown, as well as for the civil, and, above all, the religious liberties of his fellow-countrymen; who must have witnessed with much pleasure the establishment of the rights of Parliament in the reign of Edward III., to be referred to in this chapter, which have aided in developing our wonderful Constitution

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 195, 196.

² Lewis, p. 2.

of Queen, Lords, and Commons, and in making England the greatest nation in the annals of the world.

We shall, however, be better able to understand his position in regard to this part of our subject, when we have considered his celebrated theory of Dominion, fully worked out in the treatise "*De Dominio Divino*," published in 1367, which has never been printed, and is to be found only among the Vienna Manuscripts.¹ It is, for that reason, little known in this country. We may gather from indirect hints, and from the history of Europe in this century, the circumstances which led him at this time to make Dominion the foundation of his teaching.

The claims of the Papacy had been growing ever since, on Christmas Day, 800, while the Emperor Charlemagne was kneeling before the high altar in a stately temple,—where now, surmounted by its "vast and wondrous dome," rises "Christ's mighty shrine" above the supposed tomb of St. Peter,—Pope Leo III. placed on his brow the imperial diadem.² He thought that this revival of the Roman Empire, in the person of a valiant and powerful monarch, would furnish him with the means of defence from the foes by whom he was surrounded. The barbarians, regarding everything Roman with awe and admiration, would be ready to render obedience to Charlemagne, as the successor of Augustus. The design of this recon-

¹ Lechler's "*Life*," vol. ii., p. 50.

² See my "*Epochs of the Papacy*," p. 26.

stituted empire was to wage war with heretics and unbelievers, and to defend the Pope from his enemies. At first he was the lawful subject of the Emperor; but afterwards he asserted, that since his defence was the chief function imposed upon the latter, it was his bounden duty to see that the Emperor was properly qualified for the imperial dignity, and to depose him if he did not rightly execute the duties of the high and holy office committed to his charge.

Pope Gregory VII. alleged this as his reason for absolving the subjects of the Emperor Henry IV. from their allegiance. The Archbishops of Cologne and Mentz had consigned him to a degrading captivity, and afforded him every means of vicious indulgence, in order that they might administer in his name the government of the empire.¹ They were thus only too successful in corrupting a noble and generous nature. Very soon he was guilty of crimes, and plunged into excesses, which seemed to cry aloud to heaven for vengeance. Thus, then, Gregory was supplied with an excuse for interfering between him and his subjects. The Pope also wished to prohibit Henry IV. from investing the hierarchy with the ring and crosier, because they thus became the creatures of the Emperor's will, and he was unable to establish the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal jurisdiction. The popes who contended with Frederic Barbarossa and Frederic II. strove to prevent the one from imposing on the empire and Italy

¹ Milman's "Latin Christianity," vol. iii., p. 73.

the iron yoke of slavery, and the other from threatening them on the south, as well as on the north, through the occupation of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily.¹ But in the contest with the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, in the time of Wiclif, which lasted for thirty years, and was only terminated by his death in 1347, no Papal interest can be said to have been involved.² The popes engaged in this protracted contest, simply from the desire of asserting the power and majesty of the Holy See. They had not the same excuse as in the case of Henry IV. Lewis was impressed with a deep sense of religion, was willing to make any concessions so that he might live on good terms with the Pope, and was far too weak to be formidable to him. Nay, even when Clement VI. had fulminated against him two anathemas, breathing curses hitherto unequalled in papal manifestoes, simply because he maintained his just rights as an emperor, he endeavoured to purchase a reconciliation with the Holy See at the price of degrading terms which, when the Papacy was far more powerful than in the age in which he lived, Henry IV. would have refused with great indignation.

The emperors were quite willing to allow supremacy to the popes in spiritual matters, insisting only on their subordination to them as temporal princes, because they were the successors of those Cæsars to whom the first Christians had rendered absolute obedience; but the popes were determined to reign supreme

¹ See my "Epochs of the Papacy," pp. 190, 191.

² Milman's "Latin Christianity," book xi., c. 7.

over the bodies as well as souls of their fellow-creatures. The might of intellect was at this time displayed in contending for the supremacy of the Emperor in the temporal department. Thus the immortal Dante, in his treatise, "*De Monarchia*," maintains that "the Roman Emperor has no maker nor master but God," and asserts that the Church is not the cause of the vigour of the empire, nor, consequently, of its authority, since the empire was in all its vigour when the Church had no being.¹ He also displays his enthusiasm on behalf of the empire when he represents Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Julius Cæsar, as suffering excruciating agony while they are bruised, along with Judas, as with a ponderous engine, beneath the teeth in the three mouths of the monarch of hell;² or when he throws the souls of the righteous into the form of the imperial eagle, inlaid with glittering gems, with whom he holds converse as he wanders with Beatrice through their everlasting dwelling-place.³ William of Ockham, Marsilius of Padua, and others, like Dante, displayed their vigorous eloquence in asserting the supremacy of the empire in temporal matters over the Papacy.

The publicists maintained also that, according to the theory of the Holy Roman empire, the monarchs of Europe were subject to the jurisdiction of the Emperor, and that to him belonged those powers which they endeavoured to wrest from the hands of

¹ See my "*Epochs of the Papacy*," p. 77.

² "*Inferno*," xxxiv., 64.

³ "*Paradiso*," xviii., xix.

the Papacy. But he was ill-fitted to bear the honour thus thrust upon him. He possessed only a nominal sovereignty in Europe, especially since the day when the Emperor Frederick II. was beaten down in the conflict with Innocent IV., and his grandson Conradin was executed, like a traitor and a felon, upon a public scaffold. But some one must occupy his place as the chief lord from whom all property and authority must be held, both in England and the other countries of Europe. Wiclif, following Fitz Ralph, asserted that God is the lord from whom every man holds his possessions; that He alone really has dominion; that He assigns it, or rather power, in various portions to men, which they forfeit if they fall into mortal sin, and that they are bound to render to Him dutiful service.¹ We see then that he settles the old dispute between the Pope and the Emperor by abolishing both as the fountain of secular jurisdiction.

This, then, is that celebrated theory of Dominion founded in grace, which is still very nearly as much misunderstood as it was in the days of the Reformer, when it was constantly exhibited as an article of charge against him. It has, indeed, been applied to other uses, which are brought before us in the work "*De Dominio Divino*." "In the repeated perusal of these books," writes Dr. Lechler, "I have received the impression that we have here, lying marked out before us, the path of transition by which Wiclif passed over from the philosophical to the properly

¹ "Select English Works," Matthew, pp. xxxiii., xxxiv.

theological period of his life and authorship."¹ We must, however, remember that the primary object of those who framed this theory was to defend the authority of the Emperor against the Pope. I have been particular in the historical survey of the circumstances which gradually led to the conflict of jurisdiction between the Pope and the Emperor, in order that we may have a distinct idea of the object of those to whom it owes its development. Men of thoughtful minds were becoming at that time more and more impressed with the conviction that a great principle was at stake ; that the question before them was whether or not the Papacy was to become a world-wide monarchy, and to have dominion in the different States constituting the great European commonwealth.

Dr. Shirley expresses his decided opinion, that, "from a careful study of this subject, more is to be hoped than from any other source towards understanding the connexion between the schoolman and the reformer." He adds : "The theory of dominion, involving the relation of Church and State, ought never, in justice to its author, to be published without his own declaration that it was put forth as an ideal, and with the full admission that it was incompatible, in many of its results, with the existing state of society."² It occurs very seldom in his English works, designed for popular use, but more frequently in his Latin works. He could not, therefore, have intended to bring it prominently before the people. It is thus

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 50.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. lxii.

stated in one of the former:—"God is," he says, "and has dominion over all. Each man, in his degree, is bounden to serve God, and if he does not render this service he is no lord of goods of true title, for he that standeth in grace is the true lord of things, and whoever faileth, by default of grace, he falleth short of the right title of that which he occupieth, and makes himself unfit to have the gifts of God."¹ We know that many in former times have asserted that he used this theory to incite the populace to riot and insurrection; and that there are some in the present day who bring the same accusation against him. We ask, however, whether it is at all likely that a man honoured by royalty, and by an association with John of Gaunt, the wealthiest man in the country, having, too, as we have seen, a veneration for the Constitution of England, would have been guilty of propagating wild and revolutionary dogmas? That it was only a theory is evident from the fact that he distinctly asserts that we cannot tell when a man is living in mortal sin, and that, therefore, we cannot decide when he has forfeited his dominion. A man cannot tell his own state, much less that of others. "If the Pope asked me," he says, "whether I were ordained to be saved, or predestinate, I would say that I hoped so, but I would not swear it, nor affirm it without condition, though he greatly punished me; nor deny it, nor doubt it, would I no way."²

¹ "Select English Works," by Arnold, vol. iii., p. 88.

² "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. iii., p. 426.

We might easily bring forward passage after passage from his writings, showing that no doctrine embraced by him in the least degree affected the legal possession of property, and that he asserts the duty of obedience even to wicked rulers. He has expressed that duty in the apparently irreverent phrase, "God ought to obey the devil," which was brought against him as a heresy in the Council of London. He is using the exaggerated language of the schools, and is asserting that, as Christ ministered to Judas Iscariot when Satan had taken possession of him, as He submitted himself to Satan when He stood before him on the mount of temptation, so we must obey those rulers on whose moral conduct we must pronounce the strongest condemnation. He asserts the same duties as to property and obedience in the following passage:¹ "Some men slander poor priests with this error, that servants or tenants may lawfully withhold rents or service from their lords when their lords are openly wicked in their living. And they invent this falsehood upon poor priests to make their lords to hate them." In answer, it is stated that "Men are charged of God by Peter and Paul to be thus subject to wicked lords, and that Christ and his Apostles paid tribute even to heathen emperors." And, again, he says: "Moreover it were to wit, how common men should flee this sin, and serve God and man. By the law of God, they should serve meekly God and their lords, and do true service to

¹ "Of Servants and Lords," the English Works of Wiclif, Matthew, p. 229.

God and their masters. . . . By the law of Christ; if the lord be an untrue man and tyrant to his subjects, they should yet serve him. I have not read in God's law that subjects should fight with their worldly sovereigns; but Christ taught us by patience to vanquish our enemies, and win the bliss of heaven, but not with other striving."¹ And again: "St. Peter commandeth, in God's name, Christian men to be subject to every ordinance of men, either the king—as higher than any other—or to governors as sent by him, for the punishment of mis-doers or for the praise of good men. Also St. Paul commandeth, by authority of God, that every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but of God. . . . Through need, be ye subject not only for wrath, but for conscience. Pay to all men debts, both tribute, and custom, and fear, and honour, and love. Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered meekly a painful death from Pilate; and St. Paul said that he was ready to suffer death, by doom of the Emperor's justice, if he deserved to die."²

We think, then, that it must be abundantly evident that there was no fear that Wiclif would use this theory for the disintegration of society. On the contrary, in proposing it, he was influenced by the

¹ Treatise on "Seven Deadly Sins," Select English Works, edited by Arnold, vol. iii., p. 147. See also Tract "De Sex Jugis," in Lechler, vol. ii., p. 366, expressed in nearly the same language as the above extract. This should be particularly noticed because it is a tract for the instruction of "poor priests."

² "Great Sentence of Curse Expounded," Select English Works, Arnold, c. xi., v. iii., p. 297.

highest and the purest patriotism. His object was to remove the foundation of a false and dangerous theory. He wished that England should add to her manifold titles of glory in the reign of Edward III.,—of which I shall speak directly—this, the noblest and purest of all—that she opposed as strongly as possible the claim of the Pope to exercise supreme control in the body politic. The explanation of this theory of Dominion will enable us the better to understand the position which he assumed when, as we shall see directly, he asserted that the badge of a degrading vassalage should not again be imposed on England; that no Italian priest should “tithe and toll in our dominions;” and when, advancing farther than the Hohenstaufens and Lewis, the Bavarian—who contended only for the autonomy of the State in purely civil affairs—he maintained that she had a perfect right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church when she can render her more subservient to the high and holy purpose for which she was originally established.

We must remember that Wiclif was born a few years before the commencement of the reign of Edward III., and that he died seven years after its close. During many years of this reign England was at the zenith of her glory. While we may deplore the struggle between the rival monarchs, and the bitterness which made it a “Hundred Years’ War,” we must admit that the battles of Crecy and Poitiers, and the exploits of the Black Prince, have shed an imperishable glory on the land of our birth. This, too, was

the age of great men : of Wiclif ; of Chaucer, the morning star of English poetry, in whose verse we seem to see spread before us a carpet of perpetual verdure, adorned with beautiful flowers, and to hear the song of the lark and the nightingale ringing out from field and thicket ; of Sir John Maundeville, the author of the " Travels," the earliest known work in English prose ; of William of Wykeham, celebrated as a statesman, and as the founder of one of the greatest of our public schools, and of one of the most distinguished of our colleges at Oxford. Parliament, too, in this reign asserted its right to give its voice in questions of peace and war, to control the national expenditure, and to regulate the whole course of the civil administration. Commerce, also, released from the restrictions imposed upon it, poured into the lap of England the products of foreign lands. This splendid reign, too, witnessed the recognition by law of the English language, when it was in danger of being displaced by the French, and the rise of that national literature which is one of the glories of the land of our birth. Such, too, was the general prosperity after the victories in France that, as Walsingham informs us,¹ " it seemed as if a new sun had arisen, on account of the abundance of peace, the plenty and the glory of victories." He adds : " There was no woman who had not got garments, furs, feather-beds, and utensils from the spoils of Calais and other foreign cities. Then began the English

¹ Walsingham, edit. 1863, p. 272.

matrons to glorify themselves in the dresses of the matrons of Celtic Gaul." England too, at this time entered her indignant protest against the corruptions and exactions of the Papacy. This reign also is for ever memorable as the time when Wiclif began that work which, carried on, as we shall see hereafter, beneath the surface of society, issued in the deliverance of England from the yoke of an intolerable bondage. Chivalry, too, shed a parting gleam upon our native land. We have from the hands of Chaucer, its great poet, the beautiful portrait of the true gentle knight, in the prologue to the "Canterbury Tales":—

"That from the time that he first began
To riden out, he loved chyvalrie,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie ;
As well in Cristendom as in hethenesse.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for our faith at Tramissene.
And though that he was worthy, he was wise,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde,
He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In all his lyf unto no manere wight.
He was a verray parfit gentil knight."

The establishment, also, of the Order of the Garter, and the warlike spirit called into action by the French wars, led to those tournaments where distinguished knights contended with one another for the chaplet with which the Queen of Beauty and of Love encircled the brows of the conqueror in the mimic battle-ground.

The year 1363, observed as a jubilee in honour of the completion of the king's fiftieth year, saw, as Professor Shirley states, in eloquent language, three suppliant kings gathered round the Court of Edward and his yet more illustrious son.¹ John, king of France, the captive of Poitiers, was living in London, at the palace of the Savoy, waiting till his ransom could be paid. King David of Scotland, himself not long since a captive in Edward's hands, was now pleading for a reduction of his ransom; and from the farthest east of Christendom, the king of Cyprus had come to ask for aid from the first of Christian knights against the encroaching power of the infidel, who was adding the kingdoms of the Crusaders, one after another, to his dominions, and was advancing westward with rapid strides. But there were signs that this splendour would soon vanish away. In consequence of the treaty of Bretigny, concluded in 1360, after a war of twenty-two years, one-third of the kingdom of France had been ceded to England. The existence of this kingdom within a kingdom was very galling to the pride of the French. It was evident that the king of France would endeavour very soon to recover the Provinces which had been wrested from him, and to eject the hated foreigner from the territory of France. The public burdens might soon be increased; the wheels of the great machine of legislation might be clogged and impeded; the wings of enterprise might be

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xviii.

clipped ; commerce might be paralyzed ; and many, once nursed in the lap of luxury and ease, might become dependent for the means of support on the precarious charity of strangers.

The king of France, anxious to wound the national pride of England, induced the Pope, who resided at Avignon, and was a mere tool in his hands, to make application for the annual payment of the tribute of 1,000 marks, to which King John had subjected the country, when he knelt, in abject submission, at the feet of the imperious Pandulph, and received back his crown in token of his subjection to his authority. The Pope was very willing to comply with his request on the declaration of war with France in 1365. The payment had been made from the first with the greatest irregularity. Edward III. had never allowed it to be paid since he attained his majority. The Pope now demanded the payment of the arrears. Edward very wisely summoned his Parliament in 1366, and placed the matter before it.

We may readily imagine the result of this appeal. It was not at all likely that the nation would submit to this disgraceful thralldom when they had seen, as I have said, the extension of their liberties, and when their hearts were glowing with lofty emotions on account of the victories of their armies. They acted in the spirit of those illustrious men who had wrested Magna Charta from an arbitrary monarch. The prelates at first seemed to shrink from opposition to the Pope ; for they requested a day to consider the matter by themselves. But the next day they, with

the "other dukes, earls, barons, and great men," answered that "neither King John, nor anybody else, could put himself, nor his kingdom, nor his people, under subjection without their accord and consent." The Commons answered in the same spirited manner. An ordinance was made in accordance with that answer, to which there was the following addition: "That it appeared, by many evidences, that it (John's submission) was done without their assent and against the coronation oath."¹ The result was that the Pope, awed by this spirited address, withdrew from this attempt to coerce the free people of England; and that only once since, in 1374, when Gregory XI. repeated the demand, have the popes attempted to impose upon England this badge of an ignominious bondage.²

This occasion was important not only on its own account, but also because it was the means of bringing forward Wiclif on the political stage. His fame must at this time have spread beyond Oxford, for it appears that he was in favour with the king, and was, perhaps—as we gather from a paper printed by Lewis³—one of the royal chaplains. An unknown doctor of theology had challenged Wiclif to show that the king had not forfeited the kingdom of England, because he had not fulfilled the condition on which he held it in fief, that he should pay 700 marks a year to the Papal Court. He had also main-

¹ "Rot. Parl.," vol. ii., p. 290.

² "English Works of Wiclif," by F. D. Matthew, p. vi., n. 2.

³ Lewis's "Life, p. 349."

tained that temporal lords must never, under any pretext, withdraw their possessions from churchmen. Wiclif, in his reply, printed by Lewis,¹ mentions three reasons, suggested by others, for which, much to his surprise, he had been singled out for attack by this writer, whom he designates as *mixtim theologus*, "the medley doctor," as Dr. Shirley translates it,²—

(1) That he may be compromised with the Roman Court and deprived of his benefices; (2) That his opponent, with his connexions, might obtain the favour of that Court; (3) That, as an effect of a more unlimited dominion of the Pope over England, the abbeys may obtain more plentifully civil possessions without the hindrance of fraternal rebuke. We find that he does not give an opinion on the subject, but directs his opponent to the opinion which had been given in the Council of Temporal Lords. The first peer said: "Our ancestors obtained possession of this kingdom of England, and held it against all by the sword. Let the Pope come and wrest it by force from us; I am ready to resist him." The fourth says: "The Pope claims to be the sovereign of all the estates held by the Church. Now those estates held in mortmain amount to one-third of the realm. There cannot be two sovereigns. The Pope has not done homage for these estates, for which he is plainly the king's vassal. He is liable to a forfeiture of them." The fifth is more skilful in his argument: "On what

¹ Lewis's "Life," p. 340.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xxxii.

ground was this impost granted by King John? Was it for the benefit of personal absolution granted to himself, or for the removal of the interdict laid on the kingdom, or for any forfeiture incurred by the monarch? If for either of the two former reasons, the transaction was basely simoniacal and iniquitous; but if for the last reason, the Pope would be the liege lord of our King. He might, for any pretended forfeiture, pluck the crown from the head of our sovereign. And who," adds the speaker, "is to resist the beginnings of such encroachments, if *we* do not?" The seventh boldly denied the right of John to surrender the realm. "He could not, in his folly, give it away. The whole, the Royal Charter, signature, and seal is absolutely void."

Dr. Lechler and Dr. Shirley accept the substance of the speeches of the seven lords given in the tract, as an exact representation of the arguments on the occasion, and Dr. Shirley calls it "the earliest instance of a report of a Parliamentary debate."¹ I have reserved the answers of three of these lords, that by means of them I may refute that assertion. I cannot suppose that the English peers 500 years ago would have displayed the same eloquence and the same argumentative powers for which the House of Lords in the present day is pre-eminently distinguished. We observe, too, that the speeches contain Wiclif's theory of Dominion, founded in grace, already referred to; and his opinion, afterwards distinctly

¹ " Fascic. Zizan., " p. xix.

expressed, that the Pope may fall into sin, which only men of the boldest minds had as yet entertained. Thus, the sixth lord says that "Christ himself is the Lord Paramount, and the Pope is a fallible man, who, in the event of his falling into mortal sin, loses his lordship, in the judgment of theologians, and, therefore, cannot make good any right to the possession of England. It is enough, therefore, that we hold our kingdom directly from Christ in fief, because He is the Lord Paramount, who alone, and by himself, authorises every right of property allowed to created beings." We see, too, that the third lord attacks the Pope in a manner which Wiclif, speaking in his own name, would hardly have had the boldness to assume in the early part of his career. He says that "the servant of the servants of God should take no tribute from Christ, except for services rendered, and we know by experience well enough that the Pope and cardinals leave us without help, either in body or soul." We observe, too, in the germ his view that voluntary poverty is incumbent on the clergy, of which I shall hereafter give such an explanation as will serve to rescue him from those who advocate the same view in the times in which we live. The second lord says, "It is the duty of the Pope to be a prominent follower of Christ; but Christ refused to be a possessor of worldly dominion. The Pope, therefore, is bound to make the same refusal." We see then the use of this tract in enabling us to obtain an insight into his progressive development. We observe, too, that every speaker

confines himself to one distinct argument in support of the same general view as the other speakers, a fact which can only be explained on the supposition that they are the production of the same person. While, therefore, I do not wish to deny that some speeches may have formed the groundwork of this tract, I must at the same time maintain that Wiclif made them the vehicle of opinions which he did not wish directly in his own person to express.

I cannot deny that, at first view, there is some colour for the assertion of Dr. Lechler, that Wiclif heard these speeches as a Member of Parliament.¹ In the same tract, which contains the speeches of the lords, he is represented as saying, "If such things had been asserted by me against my king, they would have been inquired into before now in the Parliament of the English lords."² Dr. Lechler imagines that if they had only been published in writing, they could not have been made the subject of inquiry in Parliament. If, however, he had uttered such sentiments in Parliament, the patriotic ardour of the members would have ensured his immediate condemnation. Again, Lechler supposes that the words, "*Peculiaris regis clericus*," do not refer, as is commonly supposed, to the fact that Wiclif was a royal chaplain, but that they must be understood as intimating that he was one of the six masters summoned by the king as a "clerical expert," or, in modern phrase, as a "Government commissioner,"

¹ Lorimer's "*Lechler*," v. i., pp. 211-214.

² Lewis's "*Life*," p. 350.

to the Parliament of 1366. In one of the Vienna manuscripts, as yet unprinted, he remarks that the Bishop of Rochester (this, without doubt, was Thomas Trillek) had told him under great excitement, in open sitting of Parliament, that the propositions which he had set forth in controversy had been condemned by the Papal Court." He here refers to a Parliament held in 1376; but if he were a member of this Parliament, as Dr. Lechler argues, he may very well have been a Member of the Parliament of 1366. The fact that his name does not occur in the list of "*Magistri*" summoned to any Parliament during this period, seems to settle the point of actual membership. He may, however, have been summoned to attend the King's Council in 1376, when the Bishop of Rochester made this attack upon him.¹ It is also quite possible that he may have attended Parliament on special occasions. But though all may not agree as to his membership, and as to the speeches, yet we must all allow that in this, his first appearance in public life, he interfered powerfully in the settlement of a question which involved the honour of the crown, the independence and welfare of his native country, and her deliverance from the yoke of an ignominious bondage.

We shall find that we are not able to follow, as we could wish, during the next six or seven years, the progress of Wiclif's development. We only twice catch a glimpse of him amid the stirring events of

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor M. Burrows, pp. 60, 61.

which England and France were the theatre. We witness during this period, and the remainder of Edward's reign, the gradual decline of that prosperity and glory for which the preceding part of it was distinguished. This decline is coincident with the public life of Wiclif. The Castilians had, in 1366, risen in insurrection against their King, Don Pedro, on account of his tyranny and crimes, and had dispossessed him of his kingdom, which they conferred upon his bastard brother, Henry of Trastamare. The Prince of Wales, having regard to the treaty of alliance which once existed between Castile and England, determined to effect his restoration to the throne of his ancestors. His nobility in vain remonstrated with him against the expedition, representing to him that he ought not to take up arms in behalf of one who was a monster in human shape. But he would not abandon his purpose. The result was the brilliant victory of Navarrete, which shed a parting gleam on the arms of Great Britain.

But now disaster after disaster came upon England. The Black Prince, having been unable to obtain from Pedro any assistance towards defraying the expenses of the expedition, was obliged to impose a tax upon Aquitaine. The result was that the inhabitants were alienated from the English, and that they did not display any enthusiasm for their cause in the war which followed with the king of France. The campaign in Spain had planted the seeds of a disease in the constitution of the Black Prince, which weakened his energies and damped his military ardour. The

pressure of danger in France seemed for a time to re-animate him. A short and terrible campaign, like the desolating course of the simoom over the deserts of Arabia, ended with the awful massacre of Limoges, where his soldiers, in obedience to his commands, —because he wished to punish the inhabitants for the treachery of the bishop in giving up the city to the French, amid piteous cries of “Mercy, mercy, gentle Sire” !—bathed their swords in the blood of 3,000 un-offending men, women, and helpless children.¹ But this was only the flickering of the lamp before it expired. He was obliged to return to England, leaving his brother, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, to occupy his place. A terrible calamity now befel the navy of England. She reaped another bitter fruit of the invasion of Castile. The gigantic ships of the king of Castile, bearing down on an English fleet, conveying troops and treasure to Rochelle, captured, defeated, or sank every vessel of the squadron. A magnificent English army, under the command of John of Gaunt, after a marauding march through France without a decisive engagement, which the French had orders to avoid, perished from famine on the bleak and desolate mountains of Auvergne. Thus Aquitaine was lost to the English. At length Edward, enslaved by a debasing passion for Alice Perrers, one of the ladies-in-waiting on his former queen, sank into a dishonoured grave, preceded by only one year by his son the Black Prince,

¹ Buchon's “Froissart,” vol. i., p. 620.

and leaving, through mis-government, a heritage of woe to his successor.

This decline in the grandeur and prosperity of England pressed heavily on the spirits of the nation. Formerly, as we have seen, after the French victories, the wealth of France had flowed in a golden tide through the country. In 1371, the people had reached the utmost limit of taxation. The demands of the war, which required greater exertions than ever, pressed upon a greatly diminished population. Under these circumstances, the eyes of all turned to the Church, ever becoming richer in the midst of the general distress. It was, therefore, determined to deal with the property of the clergy and of the religious houses.¹ The former had laid themselves open to attack, because they had, in direct violation of the statutes of mortmain, passed in the reigns of Henry III., Edward I., and Edward III., received lands without the king's licence. The proposal excited great indignation among the clergy. All ecclesiastical property had hitherto been regarded as sacred. The Primate Whittlesea ascended the pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral, and was proceeding to argue that the clergy are free from all taxation but what is self-imposed, when he found the effort too great for his exhausted nature, and sank down in a fainting fit. The clergy saw in these proceedings an aggression on their rights. The result, however, was that the tenth voted by the clergy in Convocation was laid on all the

smaller livings, which had hitherto been exempt, and that a heavy tax was laid on all lands which had passed into mortmain since the twentieth year of Edward I.

Wiclif, in a passage in the "*De Dominio Civili*," which Dr. Shirley assigns to 1371, enables us to see the passing feeling of the hour. He is replying to a sermon preached before the University.¹ He was probably the only one of the clergy who approved of the course taken by Parliament. "The preacher seemed to be desiring to urge on you that none of the religious orders (the monks) in England ought to pay tenths or fifteenths or any tax, however much they may have been endowed with temporal goods, or however difficult or threatening may be the case of the king. I have heard that the religious orders made this claim in a Parliament in London, and a peer who was cleverer than the rest made answer in the form of this fable. I have heard, he said, that once upon a time the small birds were gathered together, and among them was an owl without plumage; pretending that he was half dead, and shivering with cold, he plaintively besought the other birds to give him feathers. Moved by compassion, they added feather after feather till the owl had lost his former shape beneath the load of feathers belonging to other birds. But then a hawk suddenly appeared, and the birds, to repel the hawk's attack by defending themselves, or to escape his swoop by

¹ Lechler's "*Life*," v. i., p. 218; and "*Fascic. Zizan.*," p. xxi.

flight, demanded back from the owl the feathers that belonged to them. He refused, and then each bird forcibly took its own feathers. Thus they escaped the danger, but the owl was left more wretchedly featherless than before. In like manner, said our peer, since war has gathered upon us, we ought to take back the temporal goods of the orders, as belonging to us and the realm, and so, with our own goods, wisely defend our realm."

A proposal was also made to the king, in the same Parliament, that ecclesiastics should be excluded from offices of State. The conviction had been growing in the country that they ought to form a distinct profession, and that they ought to confine themselves to the discharge of the duties of their high and heavenly calling. Langland, in his "Vision of Piers Plowman," is strong on this grievance :—

" Some serven the kinge, and his selver tellen,

In the Checkkere and the Chauncelrie, chalengynge his dettes
Of Wardes and of Wardemotes, wayves and strayes."

They had hitherto as statesmen swayed the destinies of the country, or as lawyers had presided in our courts of justice, or in some other secular capacity had occupied a conspicuous place in public affairs. The ignorant heroes of the middle ages, who made war their pastime, looked down with contempt on that learning which could alone qualify them to hold high offices of State. Of this class Lord Douglas, in "Marmion," was a specimen :—

" Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line."

But now men were coming forward who, having been better educated than their forefathers, did not wish to languish in obscurity, but desired to devote their energies to the service of their country.

John of Gaunt promoted this movement, because he was, for some unknown reason, the bitter enemy of the Chancellor, William of Wykeham, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester. Through the influence of the infamous Alice Perrers, with whom he had entered into a close alliance, the king was pleased to grant the prayer of a petition presented to him by Parliament, and to dismiss the ecclesiastics. Sir Robert Thorpe was appointed Chancellor instead of the Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Scrope of Bolton took the place of the Bishop of Exeter. We are unable to say what share Wiclif had in this movement. Probably he aided it, as we find strong passages against the employment of ecclesiastics in his works, the date of which is doubtful, and, as we know, he had influence in high quarters. "Neither prelates nor doctors," he writes, "priests nor deacons, should hold secular offices—that is those of chancery, treasury, privy-seal, and other such temporal offices in the exchequer." In another place he makes an allusion to the former offices of Wykeham. The reference is to the office which he held in the royal household, and to the additions which, as architect, he made to Windsor Castle. "Benefices, instead of being bestowed on poor clerks, are heaped on a kitchen clerk, or one wise in building castles

or in worldly business.”¹ The movement was, however, premature. In five years the Duke of Lancaster suggested the appointment of a clerical chancellor in the person of the Bishop of St. David’s. A long time must elapse before a sufficient income could be obtained from these high offices of State to enable those who held them to dispense with the extraneous assistance from the emoluments of the Church. The practice continued till the middle of the seventeenth century, when Bishop Williams of Lincoln was the last clerical chancellor.

One object of this exclusion was to place the country in an attitude of decided opposition to the exactions of the Papacy. These last were now intensified to a degree beyond the possibility of endurance. We learn from a paper lately discovered at Vienna, that Arnald Garnier, the Papal agent, had, in 1372 and in following years, been travelling about England in great state, engaged in the collection of dues for the apostolic chamber. The object of Wiclif was to show that he could not keep the oath which he had been compelled to take on his appointment to this office, that he would do nothing prejudicial to the interests of England, and that he had, in fact, broken it when he had poured large sums of money, collected in this country, into the Papal coffers. We have in this remarkable paper the manifestation of the spirit of the Christian patriot, anxious for the promotion of the best interests of his

¹ Vaughan’s “Life of Wiclif,” vol. i., p. 314; and Hook’s “Lives,” vol. iv., pp. 231-233.

native country. It was not written till 1377; but we may consider it now, because it refers to events which had taken place during an intervening period. He recognises the authority of Parliament, the increase in whose power during his life-time gave him the assurance that England would now enjoy more than heretofore the blessings of liberty and independence. He wishes also that she may not be crippled in her resources, lest she should be unable to triumph as before on well-fought battle-fields. He shows that the Church in this country is robbed of her endowments; that the poor are deprived of the alms intended for their support; that the services of the Church cannot be carried on as heretofore; and that the king is deprived of the money which he wants for the payment of his army. He boldly declares, again, that the Pope may commit sin; he exposes those mental reservations which deprive an oath of its binding force, and asserts that Holy Scripture must be our guide in all matters relating to our best and everlasting interests. Here, as Lechler says, we "have the earliest germs of his later strivings for the good of the Church."¹

Wiclif's appointment, in the year 1374, to the office of commissioner at Bruges, shows the confidence reposed in him as a man of ability, integrity, and courage, and a firm opponent of the Papal claims. The Papacy was still—notwithstanding the Statute of Provisors, passed in the reign of Edward I., which

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 220-225.

was re-enacted in 1351, 1353, and 1363, with penalties rising one above another in severity—conferring benefices in England on its creatures, the revenues of which they spent in luxurious living in foreign countries. The Statute of Præmunire forbade all appeals in cases of property from the English to the Papal Court. An abortive embassy to Avignon, on the subject, in the year 1373, was followed by another to Bruges in 1374, where John of Gaunt, with other distinguished persons, was engaged in endeavouring to conclude a treaty of peace with France. The Bishop of Bangor was the first, and Wiclif was the second, on the commission. They had power to conclude a treaty with the Papal nuncios on the disputed points. The Duke of Lancaster had probably been instrumental in his appointment. He may have known him for some years, and must have felt that he was likely to promote his own political objects, one of the most important of which was the exclusion of ecclesiastics from all share in the administration of public affairs. At all events, his personal knowledge of Wiclif must have increased during his residence at Bruges. We may imagine them in some ancient apartment of that ancient town, after the day's proceedings were concluded, engaged in discussing those questions regarding the relations of Church and State by which the minds of men were so much agitated. Wiclif showed his zeal in the matter by embarking in London on the 27th of July, 1374, the day after the commission had been issued. The Congress sat till September, 1375. The result

of this Commission was most unsatisfactory. The Pope revoked, by six Bulls, issued in September, 1375, all the reservations of Urban which had not taken effect; he confirmed the nomination of those presented by the king without first fruits, and put an end to all the causes in his Court on the subject of Provisors. But these concessions related only to the past. For the future he did not abate one iota of his claims. He did, indeed, afterwards abandon his claim to the reservation of English benefices, but only on a condition which might hereafter furnish him with a reason for recovering what he had seemed to surrender, that the king should abstain from conferring benefices by royal command. Respecting the independence of Chapters on Papal confirmation, a most important matter, nothing is said in the treaty.

This celebrated Conference had an important effect on Wiclif himself. We could have wished, indeed, that as Luther went to Rome, so Wiclif could have gone to Avignon, that he might have witnessed the corruptions of the Papacy at their fountain-head. He saw, however, enough in the conduct of the subordinate agents of the Papacy to satisfy him that venality, intrigue, and corruption were the moving springs of the Papal Court. This visit to Bruges was, therefore, a most important means of his education. He returned with a firmer determination to exert every effort to cleanse the Augæan stable. This determination was strengthened by the chicanery of the Papal Court, which defeated the end of the lengthened Conference. In Bruges, too, the emporium of Europe,

the head of the celebrated Hanseatic League, formed for the protection of commerce from the feudal tyrants by whom it was surrounded, he would be reminded that he ought to offer a firm resistance to the exactions of the civil or ecclesiastical oppressor.

We find in the history of the last two years of Edward III. a great confusion of religious and political interests. The Parliament opposes John of Gaunt, who agrees with it in condemning the corruptions and usurpations of the Papacy, and fills the council of the king with high Churchmen, including William of Wykeham, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester, while it presents petitions against the abuse of the Papal power, which might have been prepared by Wiclif himself. We must endeavour to find the clue to guide us through the intricate labyrinth. We believe, with Dean Milman, that it may be found partly in the devoted attachment of the nation to the Prince of Wales.¹ He had gratified the passion of the nation for military glory. The people had rent the air with acclamations, as, leading a king captive, he had rolled in his triumphal car through the streets of London. He was remarkable for his affability and courtesy. He was the model of chivalry. The only stain on his character was the massacre at Limoges. They felt, from the progress of his disorder, that they should be soon called upon to bend in anguish over his tomb; but they knew that, if the line of succession were not broken, his son would succeed to the

¹ Milman's "Latin Christianity," vol. viii., pp. 171, 172.

throne of his ancestors. Now John of Gaunt was credited with the design of depriving him of his paternal inheritance. This, then, was the first cause of his unpopularity.

Another cause is to be found in the decline of the prosperity and glory which have come before us.¹ The nation did not murmur at the great expenditure occasioned by the war when they saw their warriors returning, crowned with laurels, from well-fought battle-fields. But the dissatisfaction was great when England was no longer mistress of the seas, when her navy was annihilated, when her shores were at the mercy of every pirate, and when, through the military incapacity of John of Gaunt, the most magnificent army which she had sent forth had perished from starvation, and all her conquests in France, excepting Calais, had been wrested from her. The dissatisfaction arising from this cause was increased by the profuse expenditure of the Court, the usurious loans obtained by the king from private persons, and other scandalous financial transactions.² The infamous Alice Perrers, too, was amassing enormous wealth. She sat on the bench with the judges, and "defended false causes everywhere, by unlawful means, to get possessions for her own use, and if in any place she was resisted, then she went to the king, by whose power she was presently helped."³ Now, John of

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor M. Burrows, p. 74; and Longman's "Life of Edward III.," vol. ii., p. 246.

² Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. ii., p. 467.

³ Longman's "Edward III.," vol. ii., p. 253.

Gaunt, in order that he might hold the reins of power through her influence with the king, had given his sanction to this corruption and profuse expenditure. We see then other causes of his unpopularity.

The people and their representatives could not, therefore, associate themselves with him. The Prince of Wales shared their alarm as to his ambitious designs. He was also anxious that a check should be placed on the profuse expenditure of the Court. He, therefore, used his influence with his father to break up the government of the Duke of Lancaster. He called to his councils William of Wykeham. The Bishop of St. David's became Chancellor. In the latter end of April, 1376, the "Good Parliament" sat at Westminster. The members had, indeed, strongly objected to the employment of ecclesiastics as Ministers of State. But they now associated themselves with them because they saw that this was the only means of removing the abuses which prevailed in the Court and Government. This Parliament deserves the name of "Good" on account of its vigorous attempt to repress corruption and mal-administration. Sir Peter de la Mare was elected Speaker. The members then proceeded to declare Lord Latimer, and Lyons, the king's agent with the merchants, guilty of gigantic financial frauds, and sentenced them to imprisonment during the king's pleasure; and obtained against Alice Perrers an award of banishment and forfeiture.¹ They also

¹ Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. ii., p. 468.

proposed that a body of lords—ten or twelve—should be appointed as an administrative council, without whose consent no business should be undertaken. The king acceded to the proposal. A petition was also presented, from which it appeared that the taxes paid to the Church of Rome amounted to five times as much as those which appertain to the king; that aliens, who never came to see their parishioners, held the livings; that the Pope's revenue from England alone was greater than that of any prince in Christendom; and that various cardinals at Rome held many deaneries and archdeaconries, receiving from them as much as 20,000 marcs every year. They insisted upon the immediate discharge of those dangerous strangers. The exactions of the Papal collector, Arnold Garnier, were also made a subject of complaint.

We find that very soon there was a change of measures and of men. Immediately after the death of the Prince of Wales, in June, 1376, the Duke of Lancaster was restored to power, and Alice Perrers regained her ascendancy at Court. Sir Peter de la Mare was thrown into prison. The Bishop of Winchester's temporalities were confiscated, and he was ordered not to come within twenty miles of the Court. No writ was issued to him to appear in the next Parliament. He was, however, summoned to Convocation; but he did not at first appear at the meeting in February, 1377, because he respected the order of the king that he should not come too near to the Court. The Convocation assembled under feelings of strong indignation against the Government. Headed by

Courtenay, Bishop of London, they refused to give a subsidy till the Bishop of Winchester was restored to his rights. Very soon the Bishop came and took his seat amid great applause. The temporalities were restored by Edward III. just before his death.¹

In the middle of these stirring events Wiclif appeared on the scene. We find that on the 22nd of September, 1376, Alan of Barley was sent with a writ to Oxford to summon John Wiclif to appear before the king's council.² He may have exercised some influence on the Good Parliament, as on other parliaments during this period. We may see it in the complaint made by the members against the proceedings of Arnold Garnier, the Papal collector, and in the petition in which it is stated that the usurpations of the Pope are the cause of the plagues, murrains, famines, and poverty of the realm.³ But he could not heartily sympathise with the Parliament in its anxiety to remove abuses. He could not associate with the bishops because he had always condemned their wealth, pomp, and luxury—the table piled with costly viands, the jewelled mitre, and the gorgeous robe—and had advocated their exclusion from all share in the administration of public affairs. He would gladly have secured economy and reform in the State; but he could not forsake John of Gaunt, who was his only hope of a permanent reform in the

¹ Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. ii., p. 476.

² Devon, "Issues of the Exchequer," p. 200, quoted by Stubbs, "Constitutional History," vol. ii., p. 474.

³ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 240.

Church. The latter must have marked at Bruges that he was strongly opposed to the worldly spirit of the Pope's supporters. He, therefore, now called him to London to aid him at an important crisis. John of Gaunt was most anxious that Parliament should make him a liberal grant of money.¹ But he could not hope to overcome the strong opposition of the clergy, who had taken umbrage at the high-handed manner in which he had treated William of Wykeham. He may have hoped that Wiclif, who was a born leader of men, would aid him greatly with Parliament, many members of which were known, like himself, to be opposed to the Papal claims, and to the temporal aggrandizement of the clergy. But it must be remembered that this was merely a political alliance. A man of unblemished character, like Wiclif, anxious for the spiritual improvement of mankind, could not work heartily with one who was quite governed by the corrupt passions and propensities of his nature. But he saw that he was a strong man, and that he could aid him greatly in his desperate struggle with the powerful bands of Papal adversaries who were confederate against him. He may, indeed, have allowed himself to be too freely used by an unscrupulous politician who was anxious, by his means, to humble the clergy and the proud prelates who were arrayed against him; but still he made common cause with him, because he knew that he agreed with him in opposing the temporal ascendancy

¹ Stubbs, vol. ii., p. 474.

of the clergy. He thus hoped that he would aid him in his schemes for the regeneration of human society.

Courtenay, Bishop of London, a member of the family of the Courtenays, Earls of Devon, on whose fortunes Gibbon has given a splendid digression at the end of his sixty-first chapter, was an enthusiastic supporter of William of Wykeham. He was, to use the words of his biographer, Dean Hook, "vehement and impetuous, with generous impulses and a high spirit, popular in his manners and energetic in all that he undertook."¹

His courtesy had endeared him to the citizens of London. He took the opposite side in politics to John of Gaunt, and was strongly opposed to him because he wished to exclude ecclesiastics from offices of State. He saw his opportunity and was determined to have his revenge. He would attack him through his champion, Wiclif. He would bring a charge of heresy against him, and so disqualify him from taking part in public affairs. The contemporary authority, already referred to, the monk of St. Albans, the writer of the *Chronicon Angliæ*, informs us that he had great difficulty in moving Archbishop Sudbury to take part in the prosecution. He writes², "Too late, the bishops roused their father, the Archbishop, as one from a deep sleep, as a lord stupefied with wine, or rather as a hireling drunk with the poison of avarice, to recall the wandering sheep from

¹ Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., p. 320.

² Page 115.

feeding on his food of perdition, to give him to the keeper of the fold for cure, or, if need be, that the knife should be used. The Archbishop, though he had planned to spend his days in good things, and to keep no watch over his flock, whereby the sheep of the Lord were exposed to the wolf and the hireling, who were of one accord, still, not liking to be publicly known as one who had abandoned the sheep-folds, sent to invite this prodigal son to answer the charges made against him."¹

Courtenay cited Wiclif to appear before the Archbishop in St. Paul's Cathedral, on the 19th of February, 1377. He was subject to his jurisdiction because he was residing in the duke's palace in the Savoy. Dr. Shirley observes, "How entirely the meaning of the prosecution was political may be gathered from the total omission in the articles of accusation of all matters not bearing on the question of the hour The object of the prosecution was to proclaim to the world that society was endangered by the political principles which John of Gaunt was putting in practice against the Church."²

This explanation is, to some extent, correct. It does not, however, appear to contain the whole truth. The monk of St. Albans enables us to see that, in defending John of Gaunt, he may have expressed certain opinions which, by a subtle casuistry, the bishops may have tortured into heresy. He calls

¹ "Chronicon Angliae," p. 116.

² "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," p. xxvii.

Wiclif "a false theologian, but true fighter against God! named John indeed, but wrongly so named, for John is 'grace of God,' and he had long since cast away God's grace." He tells us that Wiclif "denounced the Papal power of excommunication; and asserted that no king or secular lord could give anything in perpetuity to the Church." He mentions some curious facts which are new to history. We learn from him that Wiclif was occasionally a preacher in the pulpits in London, and that he must have spoken out as boldly in the capital of the kingdom as in the disputations in the University. He admits that he has many admirers, and he does so in the following words:—"Many great lords of the realm, or, more rightly, I should call them devils, embraced his mad doctrines, and they hardened him in his effort to blunt the sword of St. Peter, and protected him with the secular arm lest that same sword should cut him off. He drew after him many citizens of London into the bottomless pit of error. He was an eloquent man, and pretended to look down on worldly possessions as things transitory and fleeting, in comparison with the things of eternity. He ever ran from church to church, and scattered his mad lies in the ears of very many."¹ We learn then here, for the first time, that the bishops were also induced to take public action against Wiclif, not so much on account of his quiet teaching at Oxford, or his judgments given to the king and Parliament, as by his eloquent sermons against the Church in the

¹ "Chronicon Angliæ," p. 116.

pulpits of the metropolis. This is distinctly stated as their reason for being urgent with the Archbishop on the subject.

John of Gaunt, as Wiclif was suffering partly in his cause, determined to accompany him to the Cathedral, and to interpose on his behalf. At an early hour the Lady-Chapel was full of dukes and barons, who had assembled on Courtenay's side. While they were engaged in transacting some previous business, a loud shouting was heard outside. A crowd, too, was soon pouring in through the side doors, wild with excitement. On inquiry it was found that Wiclif had arrived, accompanied by John of Gaunt and Lord Percy, the Earl Marshal. So large a concourse occupied the nave, that the Duke advanced with difficulty. Lancaster ordered his men to force a passage through them. Courtenay remonstrated, and told him that if he had known what his conduct would be, he would have refused him admission to the Cathedral. They at length arrived in the Lady-Chapel, where Courtenay was surrounded by the prelates and nobility.

Wiclif now stood in front of the conclave, attended by four friars who were to help him in his defence. Lord Henry Percy, taking upon himself to give orders in an ecclesiastical assembly, directed him to be seated. "He had need of so soft a seat since he had so many things to answer." Courtenay, not unreasonably, insisted that he should stand while his cause was being tried. Fierce words passed between the Duke and the Bishop. He declared that he would

chastise not only the Bishop of London, but all the Bishops in the kingdom, for arrogance. Addressing himself to Courtenay, he said, "You talk boastfully of your family, but they are not able to help you; they will have enough to do to help themselves." The Bishop gave a proper and dignified answer:—"My confidence is not in my parents, nor in man, but in God, and in God only. By His assistance I shall be able to speak as I ought to speak, and to maintain the truth."

The calmness of Courtenay only increased the rage of his opponent. The Duke was heard to mutter to some one who stood near him, that rather than tolerate such words from the Bishop, he would drag him out of church by the hair of his head. This threat so incensed the assembled citizens that they cried out that they would rather lose their lives than see their Bishop shamefully handled. The assembly broke up in confusion, and the Bishop retired before nine to his own house. He had triumphed as a politician; he had not been compelled to substantiate his charges against Wiclif. The intemperate conduct of Lancaster had caused his party to suffer an ignominious defeat. In the midst of this confusion Wiclif disappears for a time from the scene of tumultuous politics.

The Duke and Lord Henry Percy, bursting with rage, at once proceeded to Parliament, where they introduced a bill, praying the King that the city should no longer be left in the hands of the mayor, but handed over to a royal commissioner, Lord Latimer.

The populace had no sooner heard the intelligence than they proceeded to acts of violence. They attacked Lord Percy's house, and rescued a Londoner whom he had imprisoned. Hearing that the Duke, with Lord Percy, was at a feast given by a London citizen, they proceeded to attack the house. The Duke was in the act of swallowing an oyster to give him an appetite for dinner, when the mob broke through the gates.¹ In his anxiety to escape, he tumbled over the forms in his way and hurt both his legs. He fled to Kennington, where the Princess of Wales resided with her son. The mob supposed that he had escaped to his palace in the Savoy, and to it they immediately rushed. Again they were disappointed of their intended prey. They wreaked their vengeance partly on a priest whom they murdered, for upholding the Duke, and partly on the armorial coat of the Duke, which they hung up in a public place in token that he was a traitor. They were prevented from demolishing the palace only by the interference of Courtenay. The end was that a reconciliation was effected, and that the Duke consented that the Bishop of Winchester and Peter de la Mare, the former speaker of the House of Commons, should be brought to trial before their peers.

Enough has been said to show us that the interest connected with these celebrated scenes is partly political. The two parties in the State seem to have

¹ Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., p. 335.

made use of Wiclif for their own purposes. We may easily imagine, that as the sounds of strife—becoming ever louder and louder—fell upon his ear, and he felt himself utterly unable to still the angry tumult, he might have received a significant warning not to mix himself up with the strife of party politics. Thus this visit to St. Paul's might have become a step in his progressive development. The historian Milner has, indeed, said that he might have "protested against the disorderly and insolent behaviour of his patrons."¹ But he well knew that any interference on his part would only have aggravated the irritation of his friends, and have increased the tumult which was raging around him. The violence with which the citizens opposed John of Gaunt must not be supposed to indicate that they had, with the proverbial fickleness of the multitude, ceased to espouse the cause of Wiclif, or to aid him, as we have seen, in opposing the corruptions and usurpations of the Papacy. But instinct told them that he was now on the wrong side in politics; that he ought not to be fighting under the banner of one who was trampling on their municipal privileges; who sought to promote the reign of corruption in the palace, and so to add to the burdens of the country.

Wiclif had escaped unscathed from St. Paul's. But this dangerous enemy must not be left to himself. He was, however, so strongly supported by the nobility and by the citizens of London, that it was evident

¹ "Church History," vol. iv., p. 115.

that only the highest authority in the Church could arrest him in his career. The Bishops, therefore, asked Gregory XI. to give them his powerful assistance. He complied with their request, and on May 22nd, 1377, shortly after his removal from Avignon to Italy, issued a series of Bulls against him, from the magnificent church of St. Maria Maggiore, at Rome.

Three of these Bulls were addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. One enjoined them to ascertain by private inquiry whether certain propositions, in a schedule appended to the Bull, had been held by John Wiclif; and if this should be the case, to secure him at once, and to imprison him till they had received further instructions from the Pope. In order to quicken them in the work, he reminds them of their remissness.¹ "The glorious kingdom of England, illustrious for its wealth and grandeur, once produced men who possessed a sound knowledge of Scripture, and were devoted champions of the orthodox faith; watchmen ever standing on their watch-tower, and taking heed that no error should arise around them; who, when tares were sown among the wheat, were the first to pluck them up. But now, to our grief, in this very kingdom, the watchmen, negligent and slothful, have allowed the enemy to enter the city, and to carry off the very precious treasure of souls. To complete the affliction and shame, the evil had been felt at

¹ Lewis, p. 310.

Rome before it had been resisted in Britain." He tells them that he had been credibly informed that "John Wiclif, Rector of Lutterworth, and professor of the Sacred Page (it were well if he were not a master of errors!) had broken forth into a detestable insanity, and had dared to assert and spread abroad opinions utterly subversive of the Church, and savouring of the perversity and ignorance of Marsilius of Padua and John of Ganduno, both of accursed memory." Another Bull appointed the course which should be taken in case Wiclif should save himself by flight from impending imprisonment.¹ Another Bull enjoined them to warn the King and his nobles against Wiclif's errors.² They are to remind them that they are subversive of all civil and ecclesiastical government. Another was addressed to the King, in which he appeals to his sense of honour, and urges him to show the same piety and soundness in the faith as his illustrious ancestors; and requests him to extend his gracious support to the proceedings of the prelates, as he values his good name on earth, his bliss in heaven, and the benediction of the Holy See.³ Another was addressed to the University of Oxford.⁴ The Pope expressed his astonishment and grief that, notwithstanding the privileges granted to them by the See of Rome, the members had, through sloth and negligence, allowed tares to spring among the pure wheat sown in that glorious field, their university. He then commands them, on pain of forfeiting their

¹ Lewis, p. 314.

² *Ibid.*, p. 312.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

privileges, to seize the person of Wiclif himself, and to deliver it to the custody of the Archbishop and his colleague.

The alleged errors of Wiclif were contained in nineteen articles.¹

Wiclif's proposition in the first five articles is stated to be that all the rights of property are not to be considered as absolute, but as dependent upon God's grace. In 6 and 7 he lays down the proposition, that temporal lords can, in a legal and moral manner, take away the goods of fortune from a delinquent church. The theses 8-15 are designed to guard against the abuse of the keys in binding and loosing, so far as excommunication is used to secure certain revenues to the Church. In 15 he says we ought to believe that then only doth the Pope bind or loose, when he conformeth himself to the law of Christ. In numbers 10, 12, and 13 he asserts that only in spiritual matters, and not in those which relate to temporal revenues, ought the power of excommunication to be used. In 16 he says that every priest rightly ordained can administer any of the Sacraments, and absolve any contrite person. In the 19th he says that an ecclesiastic, even the Roman Pontiff himself, may lawfully be rebuked by subjects and laics, and even impleaded.

The meshes of the net had thus been so strongly and skilfully made, that it seemed quite impossible that when cast over the victim he could ever escape.

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 265-267.

An act of wisdom it was to place Wiclif's opinions as to property in the forefront of the theses, because he thus seemed to nobles and statesmen to be engaged in a wild crusade against the rights of property. The threatenings and the appeals were also well calculated to stimulate to action. The Bulls were not, however, immediately published. The probability is that the delay was owing partly to the death of the king, by which the Bull addressed to him became void, and the coronation of Richard II., with the festivities consequent upon it; partly also to the hostile spirit to the Papacy, manifested by the first Parliament in his reign. In consequence of the financial embarrassment, occasioned by the war, the question arose whether the Pope ought to violate by Provisions the Convention of 1374, and whether severe penalties should not be enacted upon all persons who obtained by Provision any ecclesiastical preferment. A proposal was also made that all foreign priests should leave the country during the war, and that their lands and properties should be applied to war purposes. Wiclif was asked by the king and the great council to give his opinion on the subject. He readily complied in a long document,¹ the date of which cannot be later than September, 1377. He knew that the storm-cloud was travelling towards him, about to discharge the bolts of death on his devoted head. But he surveys the prospect with undaunted courage. So far from retracting or

¹ "Fasciculi Zizaniorum," pp. xxxi., 258.

explaining his statements, he denounces in louder tones the corruptions and usurpations of the Papacy. True, he was followed by the populace, supported by the Court, protected by the University. But we cannot find that he looked anywhere for protection. "The Pope," he says, "cannot claim the treasure, except by the title of alms, and consequently under the title of works of mercy, according to the rules of charity ;" and by those "it would be no work of charity, but mere madness to waste our resources on foreigners, when the kingdom is in danger of falling into ruin." Again, "our fathers endowed the English Church for the living or support of the clergy." He embraces the opportunity of entering his protest against the worldliness and avarice of the Pope.¹ "The affirmative of this question," he says, "appears also by this, that Christ, the Head of the Church, whom all Christians ought to follow, lived by the alms of devout women. . . . St. Bernard, declaring in his second book to Eugenius, that he could not challenge any secular dominion by right of succession, as being the vicar of St. Peter, writes thus: "If St. John were to speak to the Pope himself (as Bernard doth to Eugenius), were it to be thought that he would take it patiently? But let it be so that you challenge it by any other ways and means ; but truly by any right or title apostolical you cannot do so. For how could he give you that which he had not himself? That which he had he gave you ; that is to say, care

¹ "*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*," pp. 259-261.

over the Church ; but did he give you lordship and rule? Hark what he saith, '*Not bearing rule, as lords over the clergy, but behaving yourselves as examples to the flock.*' Here lordship and dominion are plainly forbidden to the Apostles, and darest thou, then, usurp the same? If thou wilt be a lord, thou shalt lose thine apostleship, or if thou wilt be an apostle, thou shalt lose thy lordship ; for truly thou shalt depart from one of them. If thou wilt have both, thou shalt lose both. . . . And would to God that the same proud and greedy desire of rule and lordship, which this seat doth challenge with it, were not *a preamble to prepare the way for Antichrist*. For it is evident in the Gospel that Christ, through his poverty, and suffering, and humility, got unto him the children of his kingdom, and, moreover, so far as I remember, the same blessed man, Bernard, in his third book, writeth also unto Eugenius : 'I fear no other greater poison to happen unto thee than greedy desire of rule and dominion.' "

The Commissioners, who had been alarmed by the proceedings in Parliament, at length summoned up the courage to proceed. On the 18th of December, nearly seven months after the Bull was issued, Edward Stafford was sent with it to Oxford. Anticipating opposition, they had altered the instructions of the Pope that Wiclif should be imprisoned if it were ascertained that he held certain doctrines, into a direction in their mandate that he should appear at their bar, and await what should follow. But even with this precaution they aroused a strong feeling in

the University. Immediately after the arrival of the messenger there was wrath at Oxford. Here, they thought, was a plain infringement of the privileges of the University. Wiclif, too, was the most learned, the most famous of her sons. So degenerate had they become, that, as the chronicler, Walsingham, informs us, they deliberated for some time whether they should receive the Bull or reject it altogether.¹ The delay was not at Oxford only. As the Monk of St. Alban's says: "With how little spirit, with what sluggishness, the bishops fulfilled the mandate entrusted to them, it is better to be silent than to tell." However, at length the University, on the receipt of a letter from the primate that the Archbishop would not violate the law, or lay violent hands upon Wiclif, but that simply an inquiry was intended, consented to co-operate with him.²

The Commissioners wished to conduct the inquiry as privately as possible. They did not venture to summon Wiclif to St. Paul's, as the mandate to the Chancellor directed. They sat in the Archbishop's chapel at Lambeth, probably in March, 1378. Wiclif did not appear before them as a prisoner. The Bull directed that the examination of Wiclif and all the proceedings should be transmitted under seal to Rome, to await the further direction of the Pope. He put in a written answer, showing the point of view from which he had proceeded in these theses,

¹ Walsingham, "Hist. Angl.," vol. i., p. 356.

² Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iv., p. 276.

and justifying the sense of them one by one. But their proceedings were rudely interrupted. Great indignation had been excited in the minds of the citizens of London when they heard of the arrival of the Papal Bull, and found that the Pope was again interfering in political affairs. They forced their way into the chapel, and with loud threats took part with their honoured and beloved patriot. They saw that he was now on the right side. Sir Henry Clifford, too, an officer in the court of the Princess of Wales, appeared, and commanded them to suspend their proceedings. The result is described in the scornful words of the chronicler. The Bishops became "as the reeds shaken with the wind. Their words were softer than oil: they made public shipwreck of their own dignity. They who had sworn that they would yield no obedience to the princes and nobles of the realm, until they had chastised the excesses of the heresiarch, were smitten with such terror at the appearance of an obscure retainer of the princess, that you would have thought that their horns were gone, and that they had become as a man that heareth not."¹ They could not withstand this double intimidation. They dismissed Wiclif with the injunction that he should never again advocate from the pulpit or the professorial chair the obnoxious dogmas. But no promise was given by him to that effect. On the contrary, as the chronicler tells us, he scattered conclusions still more pernicious. He was thus allowed

¹ Walsingham, i., 356.

to depart from the tribunal as freely as he came to it, in direct opposition to the instructions given to the Commissioners.

Wiclif put forth three papers in his defence. One was delivered to the papal delegates at Lambeth.¹ The second, if the title may be trusted, was presented to Parliament.² These two have the same general form, have the same introduction, and use much the same arguments. The third was an angry reply to an anonymous assailant, whom he calls the "motley doctor," in which he makes a fierce onslaught on the Papacy, of which the following is a specimen.³ In speaking of the power of binding and loosing claimed by the Pope, he says,—“Whether the judges or delegates, by the Pope's permission, proceed to condemn my conclusions, or the lord Pope himself, the faithful are unanimously to make opposition to this blasphemous opinion.” Considerable discussion has arisen as to the exact order of these papers. Dr. Lingard, in his “History of England,” places first the reply to the “motley doctor,” asserting that it was from fear that he softened it down into the comparatively moderate apology which he presented to the Papal delegates at Lambeth.⁴ Dr. Vaughan and Mr. Le Bas, in order to defend him from this charge, express their opinion that his reply to the “motley doctor” was written subsequently to his appearance

¹ Lewis, pp. 59-67.

² “Fascic Zizan.,” p. 245.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 481.

⁴ Lingard's “England,” vol. iv., pp. 256, 257.

at Lambeth.¹ Dean Hook writes,—“There can be no doubt that Wiclif, also alarmed, explained away some of the most objectionable of his statements.”²

This method of defence and attack can, however, hardly be adopted, for there is no decisive evidence to show the order in which the papers were written. The matter, indeed, does not seem to be of any importance. Proper attention has not been paid to the essential distinction between the two documents. The one was a polemical tract directed against an opponent, the other was a calm and deliberate reply to charges brought against him before a public tribunal. Of course it would be more carefully prepared than a document addressed to the multitude. After careful consideration, I can see no reason for charging him with timidity or evasion. If the paper be only carefully examined, it will be found that he was as unwavering in his tone as in his reply to the “motley doctor.” Let this document be considered as a whole, and I assert that it will be found to contain a fearless expression of his opinions. We must remember that he is explaining the sense in which he holds or rejects the opinions attributed to him by his opponents. In the first five articles of his defence he is obscure, because he is answering in a scholastic manner those who had attacked him with the weapons of the schoolmen. But in the following

¹ Vaughan's “Life,” vol. i., p. 406., n. 18; Le Bas' “Life,” pp. 178, 181.

² “Lives of the Archbishops,” vol. iv., p. 277.

articles his meaning is manifest enough. He asserts, in the eighteenth article, that the Popes may, on some accounts, be corrected by their subjects, and for the benefit of the Church be impleaded by both clergy and laity. In support of this doctrine he asserts that the Pope is "capable of sinning," and thence infers that "he is subject to the law of brotherly reproof." "When, therefore," he adds, "it is plain that the whole college of cardinals is remiss in correcting him for the benefit of the Church, it is evident that the rest of the body which, as it may chance, may chiefly be made up of the laity, may medicinally reprove him and implead him, and induce him to live a better life." He asserts also in the sixth, sixteenth, and seventeenth articles, that temporal lords may determine when the clergy rightly use or when they abuse the temporalities of the Church, and may say when they hold them by a just title, and when they ought to be deprived of them. He would likewise have the laity reform the clergy when they fail to reform themselves. In the articles from the seventh to the fifteenth, he denounces emphatically the pretended authority of the priesthood over the unseen world, asserting that their spiritual powers of censure, excommunication, and absolution are not unconditional, but are valid only if uttered in accordance with the will of God; and that men may disregard them unless their conscience tells them that they are ratified by Him. When he states, in the eighth article, that the benediction and anathema of the clergy only make a man what he has already made himself by his own

acts, he shows that he disregards the whole system of absolution and excommunication. He says also that he is willing to defend these opinions even unto death, and adds, with characteristic firmness, "God forbid that truth should be condemned by the Church of Christ, because it sounds unpleasantly in the ears of the guilty or ignorant, for then the entire faith of the Scriptures would be exposed to condemnation."

This is the substance of a celebrated document. Surely here the trumpet gives no uncertain sound. Wiclif speaks with no hesitating utterance. We must remember throughout his progressive development, or else we shall not form a just estimate of his character and conduct. We shall find that before long he lifts up his voice in louder and sterner condemnation of the abuses and corruptions of the Papacy. Surely if, as Dr. Lingard says, the judges could receive these statements as orthodox, their nerves must have been shaken by the message from the mother of the king, or by the shouts of the London mob which were ringing in their ears. If we remember that at the very time when he declared his determination to be faithful unto death to his convictions, his fate was not decided at Rome, we ought to admire his courage and his heroism, because he exposed himself to the full indignation of the Pope, which would have descended upon him if the right arm of his strength had not been paralysed by that tremendous schism, which, during forty years, convulsed and excited the

anger of the nations of Europe. So far from attempting to depreciate him, we ought to honour him for beginning, in the face of the greatest perils, that public testimony against the Papacy which, continued by Luther, led to the deliverance of England and many countries of Europe, from the yoke of an intolerable bondage.

Wiclif expressed in these conclusions an opinion often found in his works, to which I have already referred in the alleged speeches of the Lords before Parliament, that, in certain cases, the Church may be deprived of her endowments. "It is lawful," he says, "for kings, in cases limited by law, to take away the temporalities from churchmen who habitually abuse them. . . . If the Pope, or temporal lords, or any others, shall have endowed the Church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take them away in certain cases, namely, when the doing so is by way of medicine to cure or prevent sins, since their donations were not given but with a condition implied. . . . God forbid that, by these words, occasion should be given to temporal lords to take away the goods of fortune to the detriment of the Church."

The expressions "in cases limited by law," the assertion that they should be "taken away from churchmen who habitually abuse them," and not "to the detriment of the Church," show us very plainly that he does not advocate, as some have supposed, an indiscriminate confiscation. We could hardly suppose that he could do so when he had himself

held three livings and a prebendal stall. "Kings, or temporal lords," by which word we are to understand not only lords, but the constituted authorities of the country, may, in strict conformity with the law, withdraw these endowments." He has expressed the same opinion elsewhere:—"It is the business of kings and of others to reform the eleemosynary gifts of their ancestors."¹ We have an explanation of the words, "those who abuse them," in the third section of the "Complaint," his petition to the King and Parliament, referred to in Chapter VI., where it is distinctly stated that "tithes should be withdrawn from prelates, or other priests, whoever they be, who are known to have fallen into great sins, such as pride, simony, manslaughter, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery."² At the same time it is said that they should "freely and willingly contribute reasonable livelihood to good Priests, and this were much better and easier for Priests and Commons for this world and the other."

Wiclif, too, would impose another check on the exercise of this power. "No priest or cleric should be deprived of his endowment, except by the authority of the Church." "The king should call a Synod that the matter may be duly considered."⁴

¹ "De Veritate Sacre Scripturæ," p. 466; James's "Apology," c. ix., obj. 5.

² "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 518.

³ "Sentence of Curse Expounded," c. xviii., S. E. W., vol. iii., p. 313.

⁴ "De Civili Dominio," ii., 8; and iii., 22, quoted by Lechler, vol. ii., pp. 161, 162.

We have another limitation still in the object to which these endowments, when taken away, are to be appropriated. They should be employed in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, or in those efforts which have for their object the extension of the boundaries of Christ's kingdom.¹ We see, then, that Wiclif is not the wild revolutionary spirit which some people have represented him, but that he merely sought such a re-adjustment of the Church's revenues, in strict accordance with law, as took place, with far too much violence and misappropriation, at the time of the Reformation, or such as still takes place in the case of those Commissions, the design of which is to regulate those funds, those public trusts, which, from lapse of time, or some other cause, are not fulfilling the designs of the founders.²

While, however, we affirm that Wiclif was anxious for such a re-adjustment of the revenues of the Church as would prevent their misappropriation to those who had abused them, we see that he would have been better pleased to find the clergy following the model of Apostolic poverty, and depending, to some extent, for support on the successful prosecution of their work. Thus, in his "Complaint to the King," &c., he writes:—"Not only simple priests and curates, but also sovereign curates, as bishops, should not, by con-

¹ "De Civili Dominio," iii., 22, quoted by Lechler, vol. ii., p. 161.

² "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor Burrows, p. 16.

straining, ask their subjects for more than livelihood and clothing. Christ and his Apostles lived a most poor life, as is known by all the process of the Gospel, challenging nothing by exactions or constraining, but lived simply and scarcely enough, on alms freely and voluntarily given. Wherefore, they who pretend to be principal followers of Christ's steps should walk like Christ."¹ And again, he cites St. Bernard, who says, "Whatever thou takest to thee of tithes and offerings, besides simple livelihood and clothing, it is not thine; it is theft, rapine, and sacrilege." He has expressed this view in other places. In fact, he thinks that the laity, who ought not to have conferred these endowments on the Church, should withdraw them by wise and gradual means. His scheme, which provides some protection for vested interests, is to be found in the "Trialogus," written about a year before his death. A little consideration will enable us to see that in this matter Wiclif greatly deceived himself. This secularisation of the Church's endowments would not have had the effect of carrying back the Church to the days of apostolic holiness and simplicity, when Christianity, however slenderly attended, walked forth in all her native loveliness, surrounded by her family of love. Besides, by the calling in of the Church's property, the avarice and evil passions of men would have been called into action, and a sacrilegious hand would have been laid on those

¹ "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 518.

"Trialogus," Lechler's edition, c. xix., p. 313.

endowments which have been bequeathed to us by the piety and wisdom of our forefathers.

We shall better understand Wiclif's position in the whole of this matter when we remember that he thought that there is a solemn responsibility connected with these endowments; that he was constantly calling the attention of the world to their origin; that he laboured to show that they were held in trust for the spiritual and everlasting interests of the human family. They are liable, he thought, to forfeiture by such an abandonment of duties as would defeat the end for which they were given; but he could not look abroad into the world without seeing that the obligations connected with this trust had not been fulfilled. His spirit was stirred within him when he saw that the endowments of the Church went to enrich ecclesiastics dwelling in their palaces on the banks of the Tiber; that the Popes openly sold at Rome the bishoprics and benefices of England to the highest bidder; that simony, worldliness, immorality, and the sale of pardons, of which Chaucer gives us a graphic description in his "Pardoner," prevailed throughout the Church; that the clergy possessed half the landed property in the country, many of whom were of the character described in his "Complaint," "ignorant, living in pomp and pride, covetousness and envy, gluttony and drunkenness, and lechery, in simony and heresy, with fat horse and jolly and gay saddles and bridles, ringing by the way, and arrayed in costly clothes and furs."¹ We do not understand

¹ "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 520.

Wiclif's position, because we find it difficult to realise the evils of the age in which he lived ; because we do not see that the body ecclesiastical was a mass of corruption, "full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores"; that, to use the words of a Roman Catholic writer quoted by Dean Hook, "the epoch (the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) of which we speak was an eclipse,—a very Egyptian darkness, worse than Chaos or Erebus ; black as the thick preternatural night, under cover of which our Lord was crucified."¹

We see, therefore, how it was that a man of his fervid temperament was led to address vehement and incessant appeals to the ruling powers to cleanse the polluted sanctuary. Those who attack him should not employ an *ex post facto* standard borrowed from this century to try a public man who lived five centuries ago. They should remember that they sin against historical perspective when they require religious reformers to answer to an ideal perfection and purity towards which their lives and doctrines were only the first stage. In all probability, if he had lived in our day, he would, if we may judge from the passages in which he speaks of the advantages of a division of the counties into parishes, have supported our time-honoured system of endowments, because, as the clergy are not dependent on their hearers for a livelihood, they have no temptation to suit their preaching to their passions and prejudices ;

¹ Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iii., p. 58.

and because, without it, as man has naturally no desire to supply his spiritual wants, a great number of our countrymen would be without schools, without Christian Sacraments, without religious instruction, knowing nothing and caring nothing about the God who made them and the Saviour who redeemed them at the price of His most precious blood.

The trial at Lambeth is admitted to have formed an era in Wiclif's life. We may conjecture that it took place in February, 1378, or in March of that year at the latest, because we learn from Walsingham that Gregory XI. was still alive at the time of his examination. But he died on March 27th, 1378. His death was followed in a few months by that tremendous schism which exercised a most important influence on the development of Wiclif. He was not charged at Lambeth with departing from the doctrines of the Church. He merely occupied the position of Marsilius of Padua, John of Ganduno, and others, who had lifted up their voices in defence of the temporal monarchy, or who had denounced the usurpations and corruptions of the Papacy. If he had died at this time he would not have rendered those vast services which give him an overpowering claim on the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. But he was now to concentrate his attention on the dogmas of the Church of Rome. The last note of the political period was heard in that document in which he tosses to the winds all human authorities, and appeals to the divine law in support of his assertion that the treasure ought not to be sent out

to the Pope when the exigencies of the kingdom required it. We have an intimation of the coming change in the document as to the Papal collector ; and in that defence at Lambeth in which he appealed to Holy Scripture in defence of his opinions, assailed the whole system of absolution and excommunication, and called on the laity to exercise their private judgment in regard to the pretensions of their spiritual guides. We know that before 1378 he had begun to discard the traditions of the Church, and had carefully studied Holy Scripture for the solution of his difficulties. We thus see the germ of his doctrinal development. He was now to make an appeal against the doctrines of the Church of Rome which would be heard by the whole civilised world. For that appeal his education at Oxford and his political struggles had gradually prepared him. He had hitherto been dwelling in the outer courts of the temple ; he was now to pass into the innermost parts of the sanctuary. Through the prayerful study of the Scriptures the errors of the Church of Rome were unfolded, one after another, to his view. He now, as we shall see, led the way to that attack on them on the issue of which were suspended the everlasting destinies of many millions of his fellow-countrymen.

CHAPTER IV.

WICLIF'S "POOR PRIESTS."

Other aspects of Wiclif's life during the preceding period.—Rector of Ludgarshall.—Prebendary of Aust.—Rector of Lutterworth.—Residence at Oxford.—The latter and Ludgarshall, the probable cradle of the Institution of "Poor Priests."—W. Thorpe's testimony as to its origin.—Not designed to oppose the parochial clergy, but to supply their deficiencies.—The Mendicants had the same object.—Causes of their failures in it.—Wiclif did not bind the "poor priests" by vows, and was not the founder of a new order.—These preachers were ordained.—Wiclif's description of the scandalous lives of the clergy.—The plague in 1349 prepared the way for the Institution.—Their position in regard to preferment explained in tract "Why Poor Priests have no Benefice."—Wiclif helped them in their work afterwards by sermons and tracts.—Their actual work.—The nature of their preaching.—Their success.—Opposition to them.—Comparison between them and the early Methodists.

BEFORE we proceed with the history of the important part of Wiclif's life to which we have now come, we must look back and consider other aspects of it during the period which has come before us in the last two chapters. We have seen that he had been presented by his college, in 1361, to the living of Fillingham in Lincolnshire. He appears to have resigned it, in 1368, for the living of Ludgarshall, in a picturesque part of Buckinghamshire, to which he was presented by Sir John Paveley, prior of the

Knights Hospitallers of St. John. His reason was that he might be nearer to the University of Oxford, from which it is not more than twelve miles. The church retains many of the features which it must have possessed in Wiclif's time.¹ This parish has not been sufficiently noticed in connexion with him. It must have been a centre of the missionary work to be described in this chapter. As he must have passed most of his time here when he was not at Oxford, we must regard his residence at Ludgarshall as well as the latter, as the seed-time of his Herculean labours at Lutterworth. The parish ought, therefore, to have a great interest for us. He entered on his pastoral charge on November 12th, 1368.

In 1375 he obtained a prebend of the Collegiate Church of Westbury at Aust, a place romantically situated on the bank of the Severn, which, however, he seems to have resigned almost immediately.² In April, 1374, he received a mark of the royal favour. He was appointed by the Crown to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. The living was really in the patronage of the noble family of

¹ Over the porch was a room which may have been used by Wiclif for the prosecution of his studies.

² "On the 6th of November he was confirmed by the Crown in it. There is no evidence to show the date of his appointment, nor from whom he received it."—(Wiclifite Versions of the Bible, p. vii.). Tradition, our only means of information, as all the documents belonging to the Westbury foundation were destroyed by Prince Rupert in 1643, when he set fire to the Collegiate Buildings, lest they should be occupied by the Republicans, says that he lived a short time there, to be out of sight, and occupied the old priest's house, now destroyed.

Ferrars of Groby; the king, however, presented to the living, because the patron, Lord Henry Ferrars, was a minor. It is important to remark that, unlike several of his contemporaries, he did not continue to hold the two livings together. He constantly censures this abuse in the strongest terms. We may also observe, that surely it is an answer to accusations which have been made against him, that no one saw any inconsistency between his tenure of those preferments and his call upon the laity to reform the Church. As we shall see directly, he upheld the parochial system. He only required that the revenues of the Church should be re-adjusted with a view to its efficiency. During the same period, it appears from entries relating to rent which he paid for rooms at Queen's College in 1363-5 and 1374-5, as well as from references to disputations "in the schools or elsewhere," and especially his sermons, that he continued to be an irregular resident at the University of Oxford.¹

"To this period of his life," as Dr. Shirley observes, "belongs a remarkable attempt at a practical reform of the Church, which has attracted far less than it ought of the attention of his biographers."² At the end of May, 1382, William Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a mandate addressed to the Bishop of London, states that he has heard, with great grief, a general report that certain preachers, who have not obtained any episcopal or papal authorisation, under the cloak of great holiness, set forth

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xxxix.

Ibid., p. xl.

false, erroneous, and heretical propositions and conclusions, formerly condemned by the Church, which tend to its subversion, and which threaten the public tranquillity, not only in churches but also in public squares and other profane places within the province of Canterbury. He adds, "they poison the minds of the faithful in Christ, and to our great grief draw them away from the Catholic faith."¹

It is evident that the body of men referred to cannot at this time have started into existence. On the contrary, we see from the description here given of them that the institution stood before the world in a form which can only have been the result of gradual development. The probability is that this plan of Church reform, having long occupied his mind, was carried into active operation after the time of his appointment to the living of Ludgarshall. This supposition would seem to be converted into a certainty by the evidence of William Thorpe, one of the preachers, given before Archbishop Arundel in 1407. We find that conscientious scruples prevented him from fulfilling the wish of his parents, and undertaking the duties and responsibilities of the sacred office. When, however, he found that the alternative was to be driven from his home and reduced to absolute beggary, he asked them if they would allow him, before he came to any decision, to go to certain men who were considered wise and virtuous priests, that he might receive instruction in the office of the priesthood. "As my father and mother," he con-

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 275.

tinued, "gave their willing and hearty consent, I betook myself to those priests of whom I had heard that they bore the best names, and led the holiest lives—the most learned, too, and the wisest in point of heavenly wisdom." When the Archbishop asked him who they were, he said, "Master John Wiclif was held by many for the greatest clerk of that day; he was spoken of at the time as a man of strict religious principles, and holy in his living." Having continued, as he states, for some time in intercourse with Wiclif and other men, among whom Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repyngdon (at this time, as we shall see, connected with Oxford), John Aston, John Purvey, and many more are mentioned; and having received, as he says, instruction from them, "but from Wiclif himself, most of all," he determined to associate himself with them.¹ Now, as we cannot suppose that Wiclif can have had intercourse with all these men at the same time at any other places than Oxford and Ludgarshall, we may naturally suppose that they were the cradle of this institution.

The next question which comes before us is its development and actual design. Now, some have asserted that his design was that it should carry on a systematic opposition to the parochial clergy. But this appears to be a very great misconception. He has altogether disavowed that design in various places, but especially in the tract on the question, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices," which I shall describe

¹ Wordsworth's "Ecclesiastical Biography," vol. i., pp. 276-280; Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 303.

directly. After giving reasons for the system of itinerancy, he says,—“Nevertheless they condemn not curates who do well their office and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach truly and stably the law of God against false prophets and the accursed deceptions of the fiend.”¹ They were accused of promoting socialism, of encouraging rebellion against the constituted authorities in Church and State, and of rejecting the fundamental doctrines of Romanism; but we cannot find that their opponents ever charged them with the design of superseding the parochial clergy. In his little book, “Of the Pastoral Office,” Wiclif stands up boldly for the parish priests who discharge their duties faithfully and conscientiously. He says, for instance, that “the appropriations of cathedrals deprive the parishes of the lawful preachers of God’s word.”² One plain proof that they did not oppose the parochial clergy as a body, is, that they were at first employed, “under episcopal sanction through what was then the immense diocese of Lincoln, and [probably in others also.”³ The fact was, that it appears from several passages in his works, that he attaches very great importance to the parochial system, because it provides that none through the length and breadth of the land should be left in the deplorable condition of sheep having no shepherd. He wished, wherever the heaven-

¹ “Select English Works,” Matthew, p. 253.

² “De Officio Pastoralis,” ii., c. 5; and Lechler’s “Life,” vol. i., p. 305.

³ “Fascic. Zizan.,” p. xl.

directed spire met the gaze, or the melody of the Sabbath-bell burst on the ear, to be able to associate with that sight and that sound the idea of a good and watchful shepherd labouring to feed the whole flock committed to his charge.

Wiclif shall himself describe the nature of this institution. His design in creating it was, as he informs us, to send forth good priests, following the example of Christ himself, not endowed, moving from place to place, living on alms in moderation as long as they behave well, anxious to attend to the works which are suited to priests, such as, especially, preaching, prayer, and the study of God's law, but abstaining entirely from employments such as the shop, hunting, or the serving of tables.¹ There is also much in the fourth book of the "Trialogus" which illustrates its constitution. His object was, in fact, to supply the deficiencies of those priests who, after having said mass, utterly neglected the preaching of God's word and the spiritual instruction of their parishioners. The Franciscans and Dominicans had laboured in that work: they had stood on the world's highway and addressed to those around them the words of exhortation and remonstrance. They had visited, too, the very dens of vice and infamy; they had endeavoured to snatch the outcasts of society from the hell which was opening its mouth to receive them; they had spoken words of peace to the agonised sufferer, lifting up before him the symbol

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xli. Dr. Shirley has given here an extract from one of the Vienna manuscripts.

of redemption ; they would go, too, among the sons of violence and crime ; fixing on them a flashing eye, and addressing them in a voice of thunder, they would scare them from their purpose, reminding them of the time when all their deeds should pass in terrific array before them. The multitudes, too, had hung spell-bound on the lips of the preacher, fancying, as they gazed on that form, wasted with fastings and mortifications, or as they listened to the fervid eloquence which rushed like a mighty torrent from his lips, that they were gazing on and listening to an inspired messenger of Jehovah. We cannot wonder, therefore, that, persevering in the discharge of the duties which the secular clergy neglected, they should have won the affections of those among whom the latter were appointed to minister ; or that they should have confirmed the wavering multitude in their allegiance to their spiritual mother.

I need not describe the causes of the degeneracy which disqualified them for their work. We shall find them in the writings of Wiclif, and in the political songs and satires of the age. Wiclif was anxious to accomplish the work in which they had signally failed. Dr. Shirley, however, seems to be mistaken when he says that "Wiclif was the founder of a new order, and that if he had died before his denial of Transubstantiation, his name might have come down to us in another form, and miracles have been wrought at the tomb of their founder by the brother-preachers of St. John Wycliff."¹ He

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. xl., xli.

could not bind them by a perpetual vow when he saw that the Mendicants had, in direct violation of the obligation imposed on them by St. Francis of Assisi, erected stately mansions furnished with the appliances of luxury, which surpassed in magnificence the abode of royalty itself. He knew that the consequence of the adoption of a rule of life higher and holier than that of others, fortified by vows and other safeguards, would have been that he would have had a number of followers, who, like the Mendicants, would have been constantly endeavouring to adapt that rule to their requirements, and would not have laboured conscientiously to fulfil their solemn obligations. There is much wisdom in his words,—
"This is a great deceit of the fiend under colour of perfection and chastity. For he stirreth men to exalted points of perfection when he knoweth or supposeth them unable."¹ Besides, to bind them by vows would have been directly contrary to that freedom of the Gospel which Wiclif enforced in his exhortations and instructions. His design, in fact, was, that, unfettered by vows, "poor without mendicancy," they should constantly mingle amongst the lower orders, and labour to promote their temporal and everlasting interests.

We know from the description given of them in several passages of his Latin writings, and in his English sermons and tracts, in which he applies to them the name of priests, that they had been set

¹ "Select English Works," Arnold, v. iii., p. 190. See also *Ibid.*, Matthew, p. xvii.

apart by imposition of hands for the high and holy office committed to their charge.¹ We know, indeed, that they were laymen afterwards ; but it would seem to be exceedingly doubtful whether Wiclif ever intended them to be so. Both he and they could not be ignorant, when he sent them forth into the highways and hedges, that there was indeed ample scope for their energies. I do not deny that there were men anxious for the spiritual and moral regeneration of those to whom they were appointed to minister, who, like Chaucer's "good parson," to be described in a future chapter, devoted all their energies to the duties of their high and heavenly calling. But still we know from Wiclif's description of them in his tract on the "Order of Priesthood," that many committed simony in using influence and bribes for their ordination ; that they haunted taverns and other places of the same kind, and lived idle and luxurious lives ; that they were so ignorant that they could not read the service properly ; that they took rash vows of chastity and did not keep them ; that they sought their own gain more than the good of immortal souls ; that they carried on business as maltsters and cattle-dealers ; that they led men to trust in their prayers more than in a good life ; that they became priests because the life was an easy one ; and that they were guilty of the odious sin of covetousness."² In fact, he gives such a description of them that it appears

¹ "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. i., p. 176, and vol. ii., pp. 173, 182 ; Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 307.

² "Select English Works," Matthew, pp. 164-179.

that they were as virulent ulcers, the painful throbbing of which was not only felt to the extremity of the diseased member, but threatened to extend to vital parts, and to infect the very source and centre of life.

We see, then, the nature of the work in which they were engaged. Wiclif's great object was to enlist the energies of all who came under his influence, and to send them to the help of the Lord against the mighty. I have already described the effect of the plague in preparing the way for this grand assault on the strongholds of ignorance, error, and superstition. Men, whom the loss of the objects of their heart's best love inspired with solemn feelings, determined to consecrate their energies to ministerial work ; and having been ordained by the bishop to fill up the gaps which death had made in the ranks of the clergy, were "prepared to receive in due time the teaching of Wiclif and his followers."¹ We do not find that at first it was a rule that they should not accept a pastoral charge. Afterwards, when, as I have stated, in consequence of "their coarseness and ignorance" which, as Dr. Shirley informs us, "moved the laughter or wrath of their contemporaries,"² they, as well as the new recruits first referred to, could not obtain preferment, they accepted the necessity thus imposed upon them, and made a rule that if it should be offered to them it should be unhesitatingly declined.

¹ Pages 47, 48.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xl.

We shall better understand their position when we have examined his tract, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefice?"¹ Their first reason for declining it is their dread of simony. No man in those days could obtain a benefice without certain payments which were of a simoniacal character. The prelate had his demand for firstfruits; and his officers for their fees and gratuities. To comply with these demands the "poor priest" considered to be essentially simoniacal. The demands of the patron also involved him in this guilt. Often he had to undertake some worldly office for the gratification or profit of his benefactor. It is observed that "some lords, to conceal their simony, will not take for themselves, but kerchiefs for their lady, or a palfry, or a tun of wine. And when some lords would present a good man, then some ladies are the means of having a dancer presented, or a tripper on tapits, or a hunter, or a hawker, or wild player of summer gambols." All these practices are denounced as treason against God; and as involving in the guilt of simony the patron who presents, the prelate who institutes, and the curate who accepts the preferment; and, finally, confessors who fail to censure these evils lest they should give offence, and thereby lose their friendship and gifts.

Another of their scruples was, lest they should mis-spend the goods of poor men. The rapacity of patrons and prelates, and the custom of prodigal entertainments and luxurious living, swallowed up the resources of charity; but the last reason seems

¹ "Select English Works," Matthew, pp. 244-252.

to have been that to which the greatest importance was attached. It is that by accepting benefices they would "be hindered from better occupation, and from more profiting of holy Church." The charge which they had received from above is declared to have respect to men in general, and to be binding "wherever they may help their brethren heavenward, whether by teaching, praying, or example-giving." Their mission is conceived to require "a general cure of charity, as had Christ and his apostles. . . . By this they must surely save themselves and help their brethren; and they are free to fly from one city to another, when they are persecuted by the clerks of Antichrist, as Christ biddeth in the gospel. And thus they may best, without challenging of men, go and dwell where they shall most profit, and for such time as might be convenient, *after the moving of the Holy Ghost*. . . . Also, they follow Christ and his apostles more in taking voluntary alms of the people whom they teach, than in taking dymes and offerings." Then follows the passage already given that they would not interfere with those who discharged their duties faithfully and conscientiously.¹

We may then suppose that these "poor priests," having been trained, were sent forth in accordance with the regulations which have just come under our notice. Wiclif did not, however, when he was separated from them, leave them without his powerful aid to carry on the work committed to their charge. He issued various tracts, defending

¹ Page 135.

the itinerancy, and explaining its objects, which were designed to assist them with their opponents.¹ Of this class is the tract which has just come before us. He also endeavoured, by publishing sermons for their use, to impress his own mind on the movement. We find, at the end of several sermons on the Sunday gospels, in the "Select English Works," directions to the preachers how to enlarge on the portion previously explained.² We know also that the tract of "The Six Yokes" was designed by Wiclif for the instruction of the "poor priests"; for it begins thus:—"In order that unlearned and simple preachers, who are burning with zeal for souls, may have material for preaching,"³ etc. At first they must have carried on their work from Oxford and from Ludgarshall. Afterwards, when he retired to Lutterworth, situated in Leicestershire, the town of Leicester became the centre of this system of itinerancy.

We may figure to ourselves these preachers, "bare-foot," with a staff in their hands, and clad in a "long russet gown reaching down to their heels," travelling over the land from town to town, and from village to village, on their errand of love to those who were perishing in their iniquity.⁴ One of them, John Aston, is described as having nearly shaken off the incumbrances of the flesh. He scarcely ever allowed the need of rest to interfere with the prosecution of

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 313.

² "Select English Works," vol. i., pp. 3, 6, 9, 12.

³ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 314.

⁴ Walsingham, col. 2, 657.

his labours. He is compared by the chronicler Knighton to a bee perpetually on the wing ; or to a hound constantly ready to start up from his repose, and to bark at the slightest sound. The same description may also be applied to John Purvey and others. We seem to see them as they daily stand, the centre of a large assemblage, to use the words of the royal ordinance against them, to be referred to in Chapter VI., which brings their work vividly before us, "preaching daily, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places," which they deemed suitable to their purpose.¹ The nobleman gave up the excitement of the chase ; the pale student laid aside the manuscript which he was examining with all the eagerness of one who has dug up from the bowels of the earth a long-buried treasure ; the merchant ceased to count the glittering heaps piled up around him ; the labourer suffered the plough to stand in the furrow ; the smith allowed the glowing iron to become cool on the anvil, and listened to one of Wiclif's "poor priests," as he endeavoured to minister to them sound nourishment out of "God's word," and to apply "God's law" to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. At first, following the direction of their great master, they addressed their hearers in simple language. Afterwards, glowing with devoted zeal in declaring the testimony of the Lord, they reminded them, in strong language, that this life is as nothing, less than nothing, when compared with

¹ Foxe's "Acts and Monuments," iii., 38.

the coming eternity ; or lifted up their voices in stern condemnation of the hypocrisy, sensuality, or ambition of the clergy, or the gross open sins of the laity, or the erroneous teaching of the Papal Antichrist and his followers on the power of granting Indulgences, or on Confession to a priest, or the Invocation of saints, or on the Worship of images, which they declared to be idolatry ;¹ or addressing them in the winning accents of persuasion, urged them to live in Christian brotherhood and peace, and warned them, even with tears, to make haste and escape from the coming condemnation.²

We learn that their efforts were very successful, from Archbishop Courtenay's mandate, already referred to, from the royal ordinance in which it is stated that, "by their subtle and ingenious words, they do draw the people to hear their sermons, and do maintain them in their error ;"³ and from a letter to the Archbishop from members of the

¹ Vaughan ("Monograph," p. 274) states that these errors were alleged to be condemned by them in a petition against them presented by the clergy to the king and court in 1382. In this petition they are called Lollards.

² "De Officio Pastoralis," ii., c. 3, p. 34 :—"The preacher ought to preach plainly evangelical truth." Their discourses were chiefly of an ethical character. Knighton (col. 2,660) tells us that their favourite expression was "God's Law." We come to the same conclusion from the tract, "Of Good Preching Prestis." Lewis (p. 200) gives the commencement, which shows its substance. The subjects of the sermons, given above, are taken from it, and from the "De Officio Pastoralis." See also Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 311.

³ Foxe's "Acts and Monuments," iii., 38.

University of Oxford, which mentions the great number of Wiclif's adherents, in a way to suggest that, by the preaching of the itinerants, his views on the Reformation were widely propagated.¹ We know also from Knighton that many distinguished men, whose names are given, openly favoured their opinions.² They gave notice when a preacher was coming into the neighbourhood, and afterwards stood armed around him, prepared to defend him from those whom the vehement partisans of the old opinions stirred up against them. This was sometimes the case during the reaction in 1382, after the insurrection of the peasantry. Then flashing swords, and the loud shouts of the combatants, showed only too plainly that the struggle was not altogether carried on with weapons drawn from the armoury of heaven.³

Amid the crowd assembled around the preachers might often be seen the scowling countenances of prelates and abbots, mendicants and monks, rectors and curates. Inflamed with anger, they left the meeting, and propagated slanderous reports against them. I select a passage which contains the most important of them:—"Prelates slander poor priests, and other Christian men, saying that they will not obey their sovereign, nor fear the curse, nor dread, nor keep the law, but despise all things that are against their liking." On this ground these "poor priests and Christian men" are denounced as

¹ Wilkin's "*Concilia Magnæ Britanniae*," vol. iii., fol. 171.

"*De Eventibus*," 2,660, 2,661.

³ "*Fascic. Zizan.*," p. 272.

"worse than Jews and pagans," and it is taught that "all lords and prelates and mighty men should destroy them, for else they will destroy holy Church, and make each man to live as him liketh." In answer to which charge it is said :—"Poor priests and true men say, they would meekly and willingly obey God and holy Church, and each man in earth, *in so far as he teacheth truly God's commandments* and profitable truth for their souls. . . . Why should Christian men be constrained by Antichrist's clerks to do after their commandments, when they do no works of God, but works of the fiend?"¹

This defence was substantially just. The "poor priests" were instituted to carry on their work within the Church. The charge that they opposed constituted authority, or bishops as such, was utterly unfounded. In this respect they resembled the early Methodists. John Wiclif and Wesley determined to remain within the Church, and to exert every effort to purify it from its abuses. They both made their appeal to the Bible and the primitive Church against the corruptions which disfigured the ecclesiastical system. Wiclif was unquestionably the Wesley of his day. He gave his consent to a regular system of itinerancy and field preaching, employing his own agents, who, after he was removed, were subject only to the supposed direction of the Holy Spirit. On the manifold dangers of such a system,

¹ "How Men ought to obey Prelates?" Matthew, S. E. W., p. 29. See also, for other charges, Matthew, pp. 27 and 78; and Arnold, S. E. W. vol. iii., pp. 231, 272, 293, 321.

without more provision for future guidance than he had time during the short remainder of his life to establish, I need not enlarge. He supposed that he had sufficiently guarded against them by the declaration that he did not intend to supersede the ministry of the faithful clergy. We must consider the circumstances in which he was placed if we would form a just estimate of his conduct at this crisis. The spiritual and temporal authorities were exerting every effort to prevent a reformation from being conducted to a successful issue. He must inoculate the minds of the people with the truths of Scripture, and give them a just perception of the abuses of the system, in order that, notwithstanding their efforts, he might secure the moral and spiritual regeneration of his native country. This agency, which has just come before us, seemed at the time the only one available for the purpose. He sent forth his "poor priests" on their work of faith and labour of love, cheered with the hope that, though he should not live to hear it, they might prepare the way for the coming of a time when a song of triumph should ascend from every part of an emancipated land.

CHAPTER V.

WICLIF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

Wiclif's views as to the paramount authority of the Bible, as to the consent of the Fathers, tradition, and the interpretation of Scripture.—Extracts from his works showing the importance of giving the Scriptures to the people in their own language.—Wiclif proved to have been the first translator of the whole Bible into English.—Forshall and Madden's edition of the Wiclifite versions.—The time when he formed the design of translation.—His preparation for it.—Wiclif translated the New Testament and Hereford the Old Testament.—Date of translation.—John Purvey's new version.—Mistaken for some time for Wiclif's.—Eagerly sought after.—Wiclif's Bible helped to form our language.—This translation prepared the way for the Reformation.

WE have seen that Wiclif directed his "poor priests" to appeal to Holy Scripture in all their exhortations and instructions. In fact he considered its divine and paramount authority, in all matters of faith and practice, as an essential and fundamental principle of Christianity. He had gradually come to this conclusion. In his "Trialogus" he writes :—"We do not sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or we should abide by the authority of His word, especially that of the evangelists, as of infinitely greater weight than any other. Inasmuch as it is the will of the Holy Spirit that our attention should not be dispersed over a

large number of objects, but concentrated on one sufficient source of instruction, it is his pleasure that the books of the old and new law should be *read* and *studied*, and that men should not be taken up with other books, which, true as they may be, and containing Scripture truth as they may, by implication, are not to be confided in without caution or limitation. Hence, Augustine often enjoins it on his hearers not to place any faith in his word or writings, except in so far as they have their foundation in Scripture, wherein, as he often says, is contained all truth either directly or by implication."¹ And again, "it is impossible that any word or any deed of the Christian should be of equal authority with Holy Scripture."² When, therefore, the Pope asserts that his decrees in matters of faith have the same authority as the Gospel, he is, in Wiclif's opinion, guilty of blasphemy, because he arrogates to himself the attributes and prerogatives of Deity.

While, however, in his later years, he utterly rejected the unscriptural dogma that the traditional interpretation of the Church is the authorised guide, still, more than once, he attaches some importance to the consent of the Fathers in the interpretation of Scripture.³ But he accompanies this opinion with a declaration, that if we seek diligently for wisdom, God will soon answer our petitions for divine illumination.⁴ We shall, if we approach the study with true humility of

¹ "Trialogus," lib. iii., cap. xxxi., pp. 239, 240.

² "De Veritate Sacre Scripturæ," c. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, c. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 6.

spirit, see flashes of light breaking forth from what were before dark sayings ; and shall know the life-giving power of those words of wisdom which "are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." From its divine and absolute authority he infers that, to use the words of the sixth Article of our Church, with which he exactly agrees,—“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” As the Magna Charta, too, is the palladium of our liberties, so the Bible is the charter of our freedom, securing to us the liberty with which Christ makes his people free.¹ We see, then, that Wiclif fully deserved the high and honourable title of the Evangelical Doctor which was conferred upon him by his contemporaries. An examination of his works will serve to show us that he had an amazing knowledge of Holy Scripture. Sometimes, indeed, acting on the common persuasion in those days that Scripture has a fourfold sense, he gives a forced and fanciful interpretation of passages ; but he always starts from the literal sense, to which he attaches the greatest importance.² He took the different parts of Scripture in close connexion ; he made it its own interpreter, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.³ He dug deep into the vast mine of Scriptural truth, being fully assured that, if he laboured prayerfully in the work, its treasures would be more and more unfolded to his astonished and delighted view.

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 22.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ "De Veritate Sacræ Scripturæ," c. 19.

The deep veneration which he felt for Holy Scripture, and the supreme importance which he attached to it, would naturally lead him to the conclusion that the people ought to be allowed to read in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. He has expressed that view in the "Wicket," to be referred to in the next chapter, published at the beginning of the eucharistic controversy. "Those who call it heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English, must be prepared," he says, "to condemn the Holy Ghost, who gave it in tongues to the Apostles of Christ, to speak the word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven." And again, in the "Mirror for Temporal Lords,"—"Those heretics are not to be heard who fancy that secular men ought not to know the law of God; but that it is enough for them to know what priests and prelates tell them by word of mouth; for *Scripture is the faith of the Church*, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense the better. Therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, so it is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. . . . We are not to believe the words or discourses of prelates any further than they are founded on Scripture, since, according to the constant doctrine of Augustine, *the Scripture is all the truth*. Therefore this translation of the Scriptures would do this good, that it would render priests and prelates unsuspected as to the words which they explain."¹ Further, "prelates, as the Pope and

¹ "The Mirror for Temporal Lords," quoted by Lewis, p. 86.

friars, and other means, may prove defective. Accordingly, Christ and his Apostles converted the greater portion of the world by making known the Scriptures to the people in their own language. To this end did the Holy Spirit endow them with the knowledge of tongues. Why, then, should not the disciples of Christ, at the present day, take fragments from the same book, and, like them, open the Scriptures to the people that they may know them? . . . Besides, since, according to the faith which the Apostle teaches, all Christians must *stand before the judgment seat of Christ*, and be answerable to Him for all the goods with which He has entrusted them; it is necessary that all the faithful should know those goods and the use of them; for an answer *by a prelate or attorney will not then avail, but every one must then answer in his own person*. Since God, therefore, has given to both clergy and laity the knowledge of the faith, to this end that they may teach it the more plainly, and may faithfully work by it, it is plain that God, in the day of judgment, will require a true account of the use of those goods, how they have been put out to usury.”¹ He felt, too, that, as patriots, they should all desire the distribution of the Scriptures with a view to the regeneration of their native country. The Bible, the whole unmutilated Bible, the Bible distributed in a tongue understood by the people, the Bible uncorrupted by the false glosses of that Church which claims for itself an exclusive right to interpret

¹ “Doctrina Christiana,” lib. ii., *ad fin.*, cited by Lewis, p. 87.

the Scriptures, was to be the moral lever by which his country was to be raised from her present state of degradation.

The assertion has, however, been made that Wiclif was not the first translator of the whole Bible. Sir Thomas More, in the reign of Henry VIII., anxious to disprove the charge brought against the hierarchy that they had opposed the circulation of the Scriptures among the laity during the middle ages, asserted that he had seen copies of a translation before the time of Wiclif, made with the full consent of the bishops.¹ Thomas James, too, the first librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, an acute, learned, and indefatigable writer, who, in 1608, published a most successful vindication of Wiclif from the charges brought against him by the celebrated Father Parsons, said that he had seen a Bible in the English tongue much older than the time of Wiclif.² Archbishop Usher, who followed James, made the same assertion. Henry Wharton thought that the author of the supposed translation was John of Trevisa, a priest in Cornwall. He afterwards discovered and corrected his error. It is evident, however, that the copies seen by Sir Thomas More and Dr. James were really copies of Wiclif's translation, many of which can be proved to have been in the hands of Roman Catholic prelates at the time of the Reformation.³ One, now

¹ More, "Dyalogues," fol. cviii., cxi., cxiv.

² Forshall and Madden's edition of the Wiclifite versions of the Bible, preface, p. xxi.

³ *Ibid.*, note G., and p. lvii.

at Lambeth, belonged to Bishop Bonner, and a second, now at Magdalen College, Cambridge, to William Weston, prior of St. John's, Clerkenwell. Besides, Wiclif and his followers, when they encountered formidable opposition, would not have failed to refer to a previous translation in justification of their translation; but we cannot find a single syllable in their writings which shows that they were aware of an earlier translation.

The result of a careful examination will be to show us that no translation of the whole Bible had been made before the days of Wiclif. Partial translations had been made in Anglo-Saxon times, by Cædmon, in the seventh century, who produced a rhyming version of events in Old Testament history; by Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, and the monk Guthlac, in the next century, who produced Anglo-Saxon versions of the Psalms; by the Venerable Bede, who completed a translation of St. John's Gospel; and by Alfred the Great, who, "at the head of his laws set in Anglo-Saxon the Ten Commandments, with such of the Mosaic injunctions in the three following chapters of Exodus as were most to his purpose. What other parts of the Bible he translated it is difficult to determine."¹ To the ninth century must be attributed the Anglo-Saxon version of the Gospels, published by Archbishop Parker in 1571, by Dr. Marshall, Rector of Lincoln College, in 1665, and by Mr. Benjamin Thorpe in 1842. Towards the end of

¹ Forshall and Madden's preface to the Wiclifite versions, p. ii.

the tenth century the monk Ælfric had the extraordinary merit of translating the Pentateuch ; the books of Joshua and Judges ; those of Esther, Job, and Judith ; also the two books of the Maccabees, with a part of the first and second book of Kings. We may, in fact, conclude, from the existing remains, that the Anglo-Saxons must have possessed a large portion of sacred literature, when we remember that much must have perished in the incursions of the Danes and in the subsequent Norman invasion.

We find that the Normans, before the year 1200, had a translation in prose of the Psalter and Canticles of the Church ; and before the year 1250 not only a history of the Old Testament in verse, down to the Babylonish captivity, but also a prose translation of the whole Bible. We must remember, however, that these were in the Norman-French, which was understood only by the upper classes, and that they were of no use to the middle and lower classes ; for the Anglo-Saxon lived on among them. The Anglo-Saxon versions of the Gospels and other portions of Scripture seem to have remained partially in use during this period. The first attempt after the Conquest to place any portion of the Scriptures before the English people in their own language, was the *Ormulum*, a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, made about the beginning of the thirteenth century. It does not appear, however, to have gone beyond the first copy of the author, and was, therefore, of little or no use in religious teaching. Later in the thirteenth century appeared

a poem reciting the principal events in Genesis and Exodus, and about the end of it a translation in verse of the whole of the Psalter. The earliest version in English prose of any entire book of Scripture was a translation of the Psalter into Latin and English, made about the time when Edward III. ascended the throne in 1327, by William de Schorham, vicar of Chart-Sutton, near Leeds in Kent. This was followed almost immediately by another version, the work of Richard de Rolle, chantry priest of Hampole, near Doncaster, who died in 1349. He afterwards annexed to it a devotional commentary. A third translation of the Psalter, in a manuscript of the fourteenth century, has been attributed to a certain John Hyde, because his name has been given as the owner of the book; but it appears to be nothing more than a revision of the translation of Shoreham.

The learned editors of the Wiclifite versions of the Holy Scriptures, the Rev. Josiah Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden, have furnished us in their preface with the materials for the preceding outline.¹ They were engaged on the work for two-and-twenty years. They deserve our thanks for the laborious care with which they have collated and examined the manuscripts. They have subjoined to the text copious emendations and readings. "Down to the year 1360," write the editors, "the Psalter appears to be the only book which had been entirely rendered into English. Within less than twenty-five years from

that date a prose version of the whole Bible, including as well the apocryphal as the canonical books, had been completed, and was in circulation among the people. For this invaluable gift England is indebted to John Wiclif. It may be impossible to determine with certainty the exact share which his own pen had in the translation, but there can be no doubt that he took a part in the labour of preparing it, and that the accomplishment of the work must be attributed mainly to his zeal, encouragement, and direction."¹

Early authorities concur in attributing this translation to Wiclif. Knighton, a chronicler of the period, laments that Wiclif should have thus made the gospel known to the laity. "This Master John Wiclif has translated into the English the gospel which Christ gave to the clergy and doctors of the Church, to be by them communicated to the weaker sort, and the laity according to their need, and has thus made it more accessible to the laity, and to women who are able to read, than it was to the well-educated and intelligent clergy." And again, Archbishop Arundel, in a letter to John XXII., asking him to condemn the heresy of Wiclif and his followers, after severe vituperation, writes :—"He has completed his malice by devising a translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue."²

It is a most important question when Wiclif formed the design of this translation, and began to

¹ Forshall and Madden's preface, p. vi.

² *Ibid.*, p. vi., note A.

carry it into effect. On this point our statement must be, to some extent, conjectural. Forshall and Madden enable us to settle other matters in relation to this translation, but on this matter they are unable to furnish us with any information. He could not have been known to have thought of translating the Bible before his appearance at Lambeth, in 1378, or else most certainly the malignity of his opponents would have led them to exhibit this design as an article of charge against him. He could not have given it to the world before the famous Synod of the earthquake, in 1382—to be described in the next chapter—or else the matter would have occupied a prominent place among the heresies and errors which the assembled prelates and clergy were invited to condemn. The probability is that he formed the design after his banishment from Oxford, in 1381—as we shall see in the next chapter—when he expressed his views on the question of Transubstantiation. He could no longer, by the agency of the students, who hung upon his lips at Oxford, diffuse his views of Scriptural truth through the length and breadth of the country. His conscience, better instructed, would not allow him to put himself prominently forward, as before, as a gladiator on the political arena. The hierarchy were opposed to him, because he wanted to effect a reformation in the Church. The nobility, terrified by the loud voice of ecclesiastical authority, were unwilling to come forward, and range themselves on his side. He, therefore, stood in a position of comparative isolation. He would

retire to Lutterworth, and from his parish make his appeal to the middle and lower orders of his fellow-countrymen. We shall see, in the last chapter, that tract after tract issued from his parish, and circulated rapidly through the country. The circumstances which led him to issue them may have disposed him to carry into effect an idea which he had been for some time previously revolving in his mind, and to resolve to appeal to the middle and lower classes not only through his "poor priests," but also through his translation of the Bible. The fact that he does not mention the matter definitely before 1381, but that afterwards he often refers to it in his writings, may be considered as strong corroborative evidence of the truth of our assertion.¹

This was a sublime conception for the age in which he lived. Difficulties, apparently insurmountable, stood in the way of the design, which embraced not only the literal translation of the Bible, but also its circulation among all ranks and orders of his fellow-countrymen. Many would have shrunk back terrified by the prospect of the formidable opposition and persecution which they might expect to be called on to encounter. Bishops and priests, and many of the laity, might have been expected to be banded together in a dark confederacy against them. Fear of this hostility is often expressed in tracts published at this time, and every effort is exerted to disarm it by a powerful statement of the strong arguments

¹ "John de Wycliffe, a Monograph," by Vaughan, p. 352.

for circulating the sacred Scriptures in a tongue understood by the people.¹ The consequence is that the persons of the translators are wrapped in obscurity. Luther often in letters refers to the work of translation, by which he was beguiling the tedium of his banishment to the gloomy recesses of the forest of Thuringia. But we scarcely find in Wiclif's writings any references to the progress of his work. The fact was, that he and those who aided him were afraid that, if they blazed abroad the matter, the powerful hand of authority would prevent them from continuing the translation, and would inflict severe persecution upon them. The consequence is that we are ignorant of the different stages of a work which, as we shall see, prepared the way for the Reformation, and affected the spiritual destinies of millions then unborn.

We can, however, trace him indistinctly in the preparation for his work. The probability is that he prepared himself slowly and gradually by previous attempts at translation. The evidence, indeed, which bears on the point is scanty, and only sufficient, it should be remembered, to afford to the conclusions which it suggests a presumption of their truth.² Dr. Lechler seems to be correct when he states that the learned editors of Wiclif's Bible have wrongly attributed to him commentaries on the book of the Revelation of St. John, and on the Gospels of St. Matthew,

¹ Forshall and Madden's preface, pp. xiii., xiv.

² Wiclifite Versions, p. vi.

St. Luke, and St. John.¹ We seem, however, to have more reason for regarding as his work a translation of the Latin Harmony of the Gospels, by Prior Clement, of Lanthony in Monmouthshire, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century.² An appendix, containing portions of the Catholic Epistles and extracts from other parts of the Bible, was added, as a substitute for a complete Bible version. The reasons for attributing it to Wiclif are that it has been from the time of Bale uniformly regarded as his work, and that it has a very close agreement with his version of the Gospels. The preface is one of the tracts above referred to, by which he endeavoured to disarm hostility, and to prepare the way for his translation. There is a genuine Wiclifite ring in the sentences: "Pleasure-loving, learned men of the world reply and say, laymen may easily fall into error, and therefore they ought not to dispute upon questions of Christian faith. Alas ! alas ! what cruelty it is to rob a whole kingdom of bodily food, because a few fools may be gluttonous, and may do themselves and others mischief by their immoderate use of such food. . . . When a child makes a slip in his first day's lesson, would there be any sense in making that a reason for never allowing a child to come to lessons at all ? Who, then, in this way of it would ever become a scholar ? What sort of antichrist is this, who, to the sorrow of Christian men, is so bold as to prohibit the

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp: 334-340 ; Wiclifite Versions, pp. viii.-x.

² Wiclifite Versions, preface, pp. x.-xii.

laity from learning this holy lesson, which is so earnestly commanded by God? Every man is bound to learn it, that he may be saved, but every layman who shall be saved is a very priest of God's own making, and every man is bound to be a very priest."¹

The New Testament was probably translated by Wiclif. We come to this conclusion, because the same style is observable throughout it. Wiclif was, however, ignorant of Greek. The translation was, therefore, made from the Latin Vulgate. The consequence is that it does not always faithfully represent the original Greek or Hebrew. Thus, there are two remarkable passages in the Epistles of St. Peter, which stand thus in Wiclif's Bible, and the authorised version, respectively :—

I Peter, c. iii., v. 22.

WICLIF.

That is in the righthalf of
God, he *swolewing* deeth, or
*destrinyng*e, that we shulde be
maad eyres of euerlastinge lijf;
he gon vnto heuen, aungels,
and powers, and vertues, maad
sugettes to him.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

Who is gone into heaven,
and is on the right hand of
God; angels and authorities
and powers being made subject
unto him.

Again, 2 Peter, i., v. 10:

Wherefore, britheren, more
bisye ye, that *bi goode werkis*
ye make youre clepyng and
chesyng certeyn.

Wherefore, the rather,
brethren, give diligence to
make your calling and election
sure.

¹ Wiclifte Versions of the Bible, vol. i., p. xv., col. i.

The interpolated words (printed in italics) are in the Vulgate: "Swallowing death, that we might be made heirs of eternal life," and "by good works." The translation of the Old Testament was taken in hand at the same time with the translation of the New, or within a short time of its completion. We learn, from a remark on a copy of the original manuscript, added not long after it was made, that the translation was executed by Nicholas of Hereford. The original, and the copy, which have been preserved in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford, end abruptly in the middle of a sentence in the book of Baruch, chap. iii. v. 20.¹ This fact seems to indicate that the translator was suddenly interrupted in his work. Now, we learn that Nicholas Hereford was cited, in May, 1382—as we shall see in the next chapter—to appear before a provincial synod, in London, to answer for a sermon preached on Ascension Day before the University, and that he was excommunicated on July 1.² He afterwards went to Rome to appeal against the sentence. He was here thrown into prison, where he remained for some years, but was afterwards released by the populace during an insurrection, and returned to England. The translation, thus interrupted, was probably completed by Wiclif. The style is different from Hereford's translation. The date thus obtained enables us to conjecture the time of the completion

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xvii.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 250.

of the New Testament. This must have been finished in June, 1382, if the translator of the Old Testament had advanced so far as the Book of Baruch.¹ We must add, that prefaces were attached to the Old and New Testament. They were translations of the same prologues which preceded the different books in the manuscripts of the Vulgate in the fourteenth century. In the case of the Old Testament, they consist of letters and other pieces of St. Jerome.

"The translation of the whole Bible being thus completed the next care was to render it as useful as, possible. With this view, a table of the portions of Scripture read as the Epistles and Gospels of the Church service on the Sundays, feasts, and fasts of the year was framed. This table was inserted in certain copies of the newly-translated Bibles, and the passages were marked in the text by letters placed in the margin, over and against the beginning and end of the several portions; or sometimes the margin contained a rubric stating at length the service for which the lesson was appointed. To some copies of the New Testament such portions of the Old were annexed as were used in the Church service instead of the Epistles. In order also to render those parts of Scripture in most frequent use accessible at less cost, books were written containing nothing more than the Gospels and Epistles read in the service of the Mass."²

The version thus completed was not altogether

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 343.

² Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xix.

satisfactory. "The part translated by Hereford," it is said, "differed in style from the rest. It was extremely literal, occasionally obscure, and sometimes incorrect; and there were other blemishes throughout, incident to a first essay of this magnitude, undertaken under very unfavourable circumstances, by different persons and at different times, upon no agreed or well-defined principle."¹ Wiclif himself may, therefore, have suggested, and perhaps commenced, a new version. The learned editors of the Wiclifite Versions have concluded, for sufficient reasons, that John Purvey was the translator.² They have satisfied themselves, after careful examination, that he was "the author of the General Prologue, and consequently of the later version to which it belongs." He appears to have lived with Wiclif in his later years, and after his death to have preached at Bristol.³ It seems impossible now to ascertain to whom Purvey, in the Prologue, alludes as having aided him in the preparation of his work.⁴ The version thus translated—originally supposed to have been published in 1395—appears, on better evidence, to have been published in 1388. The General Prologue was designed as a preface to the Old Testament, and not to the New.⁵ The books of the New Testament have prologues which are generally those of the earlier version, with alterations and additions. The

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xx.

² *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv.-xxviii.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv., note U.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57, and preface, p. xxviii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

version is everywhere founded on the previous translation, and was intended to render it more correct, intelligible, and popular. The volumes, edited by Forshall and Madden, give the two versions, column by column, in the same pages. Those qualified to speak on the subject assure us that there are certain criteria by which the earlier date of the one, and the later date of the other, may be easily distinguished. But so little attention has been paid to those differences, that the New Testament printed by Mr. Lewis, more than a century ago, does not give us the earlier translation by Wiclif, but the revised translation by Purvey. No part of Wiclif's translation—with the exception of the Song of Solomon, given by Dr. Adam Clarke in his commentary on the Bible—had ever been printed when Forshall and Madden began their great edition about 1828.¹ The evidence given by them is absolutely decisive.² "Dr. Waterland," it is said, "who greatly assisted Lewis in obtaining information for his history of the English translations of the Bible, was at first inclined to think that both versions were the work of Wiclif, but afterwards concluded that the later version and the General Prologue were by John Purvey. Unfortunately, having but little leisure for the investigation, he was induced, by a comparison of the style and language employed in the versions, to take for the earlier of the two that which was, in fact, the later. Lewis

¹ Preface, vol. i., p. i., note A. Mr. L. Wilson, from a MS. in his own possession, printed the New Testament in 1848.

² Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xxii.

adopted the opinions of Dr. Waterland, and, interweaving in his narrative the information supplied to him much as it came to his hands, has compiled an account which is not only confused, but sometimes inconsistent with itself. Mr. Baber, when he reprinted Lewis's edition of the New Testament, repeated this mistake."¹ The discovery of it was one of the great services rendered by Forshall and Madden to the students of Wiclifite literature.

Wiclif did not live long enough to see the completion of Purvey's version, but he saw the completion of the Bible with which he is particularly identified. We come to this conclusion because, in the General Prologue, published, as we have seen, in the year 1388, a reference is made to it as "the Bible of late translated." Now, a less time than four years could hardly have intervened between the completion of the first version and the careful preparation of the second. Besides, tradition tells us that he lived to see the fulfilment of his wishes.² No doubt he would rejoice with such joy as a noble and Christian spirit would feel when he saw the manuscript, in the preparation of which he had watched, and laboured, and prayed, lying completed before him; and he would bless God because he had been allowed to finish a work which, he fondly hoped, would prove the instrumental cause of the moral and spiritual regeneration of his native country. Purvey's version had very soon cast the work of that master-mind into the shade.

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, pp. xxi.

² Vaughan, "John de Wycliffe, a Monograph," p. 353.

But, if his glorified spirit was conscious of what is transacted upon earth, he would have rejoiced because Purvey had made it more intelligible and popular than his own version, and had thus insured its rapid circulation among all ranks and orders of his fellow-countrymen.

We are informed that the book was eagerly sought after and read. The king and the princes of the blood royal did not disdain to possess copies. We may form some idea of the value attached to it by the rich, when we hear that costly copies on vellum were executed for them by experienced scribes, who would have to be paid in proportion to the skill which they had attained in the art of transcription.¹ Our sense of the value attached to the Wiclif Bible is increased when we hear that the cost of a Testament of Wiclif's version was about equal to £40 of our present money, a sum considerably more than half the income then required for the maintenance of a substantial English farmer. We may form, too, some idea of the eagerness with which it was read when we hear that nearly 150 manuscripts, containing the whole or parts of Purvey's Bible, most of them written within forty years from its completion, were found when the edition of Forshall and Madden was published in 1850, and remember that the most powerful and active measures were taken to suppress the version; that they were burnt or destroyed as productions of heretical depravity; that all who pos-

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xxxii.

seduced copies were exposed to severe persecution ; and that in the course of four or five centuries many more manuscripts have been destroyed through accident or negligence.¹ We may, then, safely come to the conclusion that we have now only a very small portion of those which were originally in circulation. We are told also, that so great was the eagerness to possess the Bible, that those who could not procure the volume of the book would give a load of hay for a few favourite chapters, and that many such scraps were consumed upon the persons of martyrs at the stake. They would hide the forbidden treasure under the floors of the houses, and expose their lives to danger rather than surrender the book ; they would sit up all the night, their doors being shut for fear of surprise, reading or hearing others read the Word of God ; they would bury themselves in the woods, and there converse with it in silence and solitude ; they would, while tending their flocks in the field, still steal an hour for drinking in the good tidings of grace and salvation.²

But, while we speak of the eagerness with which multitudes read the sacred volume and dwelt upon truths which fill the angels with wonder and delight, we must not omit to notice a secondary benefit which Wiclif's Bible has conferred in the formation of the English language. This observation is true also with reference to our own authorised version. Truly did

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xxxiii.

² Wordsworth's "Eccl. Biog.," i., pp. 418, 419, where Foxe and others attest these things.

Coleridge say that "intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style;" and an eloquent living divine has asked, "Who can estimate the grandeur, the depth, the expansive power which our language has derived from the national liturgical offices, as well as from the national translation of the Scriptures?" We have no doubt that our great Reformer's Bible conferred the same benefit on the Anglo-Norman dialect in the age in which he lived.¹ It marks an important epoch in the development of the English language. Chaucer has indeed been represented as the father of modern English literature. He is superior to Wiclif in his command of language, which he has made in a remarkable manner to express strength of thought, variety of feeling, and delicate shades of meaning; in the wit and humour in the tales with which the pilgrims beguiled their journey to the tomb of the Sainted Martyr of Canterbury; or in the beauty of his descriptions, as when he speaks of the silver dew-drops hanging on the leaves in the early morning, or when he represents the lark, the messenger of day, saluting in her song the grey morning, and soaring continually higher and higher until she is lost in the blue firmament. But Chaucer addressed himself to the courtiers and nobles who surrounded Edward III. The case was, however, entirely different with Wiclif. In his translation of the Bible he has enshrined, in language at once simple, perspicuous, beautiful, and

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 347, 348.

nervous, the motives to action, the duties, the consolations, the hopes, and the destinies of the whole human family. Thus, while Chaucer was labouring to fix the English tongue among the higher classes, Wiclif established it yet more permanently by connecting it with the immortal hopes of all his fellow-countrymen. Though it contains many words which have passed out of use, it can scarcely yet be called obsolete, and may easily be understood in the present day. Among those words we may mention "clepe," "to call," Matt. ii. 7; "teen or tind," "to kindle," Matt. v. 15; "helthe" for "salvation," Philip. ii. 12; "assoil" for "determine," Acts xix. 39; "sothe" (sooth), "true," Phil. iv. 8; and "unspekende childer and souk-ende" for "babes and sucklings," Ps. viii. 2. In his other works, both Latin and English, he is so rapid in his composition, and occasionally so carried away by his impetuosity, that he pays little attention to lucid order or elegance of language. But, as Mr. Turner observes, "in his version of the Scriptures, the unrivalled combination of force, simplicity, dignity, and feeling in the original compel his old English, as they seem to compel every other language into which it is translated, to be clear, interesting, and energetic."¹

We must, however, never forget that the translation of the Scriptures into his own mother tongue was of transcendent importance, because it was the great work by which he hastened on the Reformation in England. He had now cast into the soil a seed,

¹ Turner's "History of England during the Middle Ages," vol. v., p. 425.

which, after lying dormant for a time, would spring up, and flourish, and grow into a mighty tree, "the leaves of which should be for the healing of the nations," long after he who had planted it was silent in the grave. The followers of Wiclif remembered the words of their great master, that the Scripture alone is the faith of the Church ; and that "an answer by prelate or attorney at the judgment-seat of Christ will not avail, but every one must answer in his own person."¹ They would, therefore, follow his advice, and persevere in the prayerful study of the records of heavenly truth. The words just referred to filled the hierarchy and clergy with terror and indignation. They thought that their occupation was gone if all might, without the intervention of the priesthood, consult the sacred oracles. Hence the fury of the persecutor awoke against the followers of Wiclif. Archbishop Arundel and Convocation issued the following stringent prohibition in 1408 :—"That no unauthorised person should hereafter translate any portion of Holy Scripture into English, or any other language, by way of book, little book, or tract ; and that no such book or tract should be read, either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, that was composed lately in the time of John Wiclif, or since, under the penalty of the greater excommunication, till the said translation shall be approved either by the Bishop of the diocese, or, if necessary, by a Provincial Council."²

¹ Page 154.

² Wilkins's "Concilia," vol. iii., p. 317.

Happily this decree was not issued for several years after the completion of the translation. Otherwise, perhaps, it would never have been put into circulation. But abundant use had been made of the interval.¹ Through the efforts of Wiclif's "poor priests" and others, the Scriptures had been circulated, and their pages opened to the delighted view of many thousands of our fellow-countrymen. Thus they were led to see that the Church of Rome had corrupted the faith once delivered to the saints, and to cast off the superstitions of their forefathers. We shall see in the last chapter, in which Wiclif's work in this country will be connected directly with our Reformation, that the study of his Bible and of Wiclif literature, carried on in silence and solitude, was gradually preparing his fellow-countrymen to escape from the yoke of the oppressor. Thus, then, the good pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand. We have seen indeed that there were some unavoidable imperfections in his translation. But still we can have no hesitation in saying that it is a monument to him more durable than brass or marble. If we would have a full sense of the benefit which he conferred upon his country, we must remember the great hindrances to the successful prosecution of the work. In the sixteenth century, Bibles, sermons, commentaries, hymns, and catechisms were constantly flying on the wings of the press over Europe. But, when Wiclif resolved that all his

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," by Prof. Burrows, p. 20.

fellow-countrymen should possess a copy of the Bible, we must remember the slow process of transcription by which copies were produced, and the enormous cost of each copy, already referred to, demanding a sacrifice far greater than that which is required for the most elegant and sumptuous curiosities of literature in the age in which we live. Thus, then, his difficulties would be far greater than those of the noble army of Reformers, and of their great leader, in the sixteenth century. He must expect also that the sword of the persecutor would be unsheathed against him. But he persevered in his self-allotted task. Trial did not daunt, difficulty did not discourage him. We have seen that, notwithstanding this labour, his work has been superseded by the version of one who was far inferior to him, and that it has, in this later age, been consigned to comparative oblivion through the neglect of certain criteria by which it might have been easily distinguished. We are now, however, able to do him full justice. While we admit that Purvey's version is better suited, in point of language, than his own, for general reading, we must never allow ourselves to forget that to him pre-eminently our gratitude is due, because he originated the idea of a work of surpassing grandeur, by his steady perseverance and patient industry conquered difficulties which an ordinary man would have deemed insurmountable, and at length, carrying it to a successful issue, secured by means of it the spiritual emancipation of many thousands of his fellow-countrymen.

CHAPTER VI.

WICLIF AS A REFORMER IN DOCTRINE.

1378-1382.

Wiclif's progressive development should be remembered.—He becomes a reformer in doctrine.—His change of views in regard to the Papacy.—His conflict with the Mendicant Orders.—He attacks Transubstantiation at Oxford.—Comparison between him and Luther at Wittenberg.—He is forbidden to expound his views at Oxford.—He appeals to the King.—He publishes his "Wicket."—Insurrection of the peasantry.—His views are proved not to have led to it.—Courtenay is appointed to the Primacy.—He summons a council to condemn Wiclif at Blackfriars.—The assembly was disturbed by an earthquake.—Theses drawn from Wiclif's writings condemned at it.—A royal ordinance, called a statute, against the preachers, was obtained by Courtenay in a surreptitious manner.—The Archbishop attacks Wiclif's followers at Oxford.—Opposition to him.—He obtains a royal warrant against the Wiclifites at Oxford, which was successful.—Consequences of his success.—The preachers were also silenced.—Wiclif was summoned before a synod at Oxford.—No sentence was passed.—Addresses his "Complaint" to the Parliament.

WE have now come to an important crisis in the life of Wiclif. I have already said that if we would form a just estimate of his character we must remember his gradual development throughout his illustrious career. His different changes of opinion are brought before us especially in his unpublished writings. Thus, in one of the latter he says, other statements

which at one time appeared strange to me now appear to be sound and true, and I defend them; for, in the words of St. Paul (1 Corinth. xiii. 11), "When I was a child in the knowledge of the faith I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when, in God's strength, I became a man, I put away, by His grace, childish thoughts."¹ We cannot fail to see that, during the first twelve years of his public life, he had been engaged in lopping off the branches instead of striking at the root of that upas-tree which was shedding a deadly blight over the nations of Europe. He attacked the usurpations of the Church of Rome on the rights of the Crown, and her spoliation of the country for the benefit of those who were living in luxurious ease in their palaces at Rome, and sought by legislative measures to reform those abuses; whereas he ought to have directed his attention to her errors in doctrine, and to have shown that she had corrupted the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. But even during this period it is manifest that the light which had dawned on the darkness of his soul was slowly and steadily increasing in brightness. In the years before 1378 he recognised the sufficiency of the Word of God as the source of human knowledge, and condemned those who had intruded into its place the traditions of the Church.² We have also seen that at Lambeth he asserted the right of the laity to bring instruction to the test of Holy Scripture, and to exercise their private judgment

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

as to the pretensions of their spiritual guides. He also, about 1378, wrote in the "De Civili Dominio,"¹ "The Holy Ghost teaches us the right understanding of Scripture, as Christ opened the Scripture to the Apostles." He asserted, with the greatest decision, in his later years, these fundamental articles of Christianity.

After 1378 the energies of Wiclif were concentrated on a reformation in doctrine. No doubt this development is due to the prayerful study of the records of heavenly truth. But the schism in the Papacy was the means of directing his thoughts to this all-important subject. He had hitherto not only attacked the Papacy in the manner just described, but had also asserted in the parliamentary speeches, in his paper as to Garnier, and at Lambeth,² that the Pope might fall into mortal sin, that he might err in judgment, that his office is not necessary for the ends of salvation, and that he held *jure humano* and not *jure divino*.³ But still he would not attack the Papacy as such in its essence. He would only resist it in its attacks on the State in matters of finance or of civil jurisdiction. He would not impugn the prerogatives of the Church. He was very far from casting off his allegiance to the Papacy. On the contrary we find, from one of the hitherto unpublished Vienna manuscripts, that, on the elevation of Urban VI. to the Papal throne in 1378, he expressed his joy in the following language:—

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 29. ² Pages 85, 94-95, 121.

³ See the "De Veritate Sacre Scripturæ," and the "De Civili Dominio," quoted by Lechler, vol. ii., p. 156.

"Blessed be the Lord, who has given to His Church in these days in Urban VI. a Catholic head, an evangelical man, a man who, in the work of reforming the Church that it may live conformably to the law of Christ, follows the due order by beginning with himself and the members of his household. From his works, therefore, it behoves us to believe that he is the head of our Church."¹ Urban was elected directly after the termination of the seventy years' "Babylonian captivity" at Avignon.

But the bright vision soon vanished away. Finding, when it was too late, that they had placed over themselves a Pope who rendered himself obnoxious to them by his harsh and imperious manner, and by his reforming zeal, the French cardinals, anxious to retain the Pontifical Court in their own land, withdrew from him their allegiance, and elected an anti-Pope, Robert of Geneva, who assumed the name of Clement VII. They alleged, as their justification for this act, that they were under restraint when they elected Urban VI. We must observe, however, that they would have remained quiescent under the dominion of Urban if he had not provoked them by haughtiness and rudeness. But though we may differ in opinion as to the legitimacy of Urban or Clement, we must agree as to the enduring effects which the schism produced on the Papacy. The world could not fail to regard the Popes and their office with well-merited contempt, when they saw them wandering about

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 134.



Europe blackening each other's character, exerting every effort to enlist the princes of Europe in their cause, and hurling at each other their spiritual thunderbolts. Thus men became more determined to oppose the Papacy ; thus the cup of public indignation became full to the very brim ; thus an earnest desire was awakened in the minds of the inhabitants of Europe for the cleansing of that Augæan stable of corruption.

These Popes shared the allegiance of Europe in nearly equal proportions. Wiclif, with the rest of England, at first recognised Urban VI., but when the latter began to excommunicate his rival, he cast off his allegiance to him, and decided on remaining in a position of neutrality. He very soon, however, found that to do so was an impossibility, and that he must altogether break away from the Papacy. In this, the third stage of his development, we must not be surprised to find, from the nature of the case, that he is more decided in his language, and that he becomes a more fearless antagonist of the Papacy. He shows that the Vicar of Christ on earth is the very reverse of Him whose Vicar he claimed to be. When he was attacked, as we shall see directly, by the Papal partisans, the Mendicants, on the dogma of Transubstantiation, he attacks the Papacy in the very strongest terms as a God-blaspheming institution. In one of his sermons in one of the Vienna manuscripts, he says that the Papal office itself is of the wicked one, seeing that no divine warrant existed for more than the pastoral care of souls and an exemplary walk in

humility and sanctity, along with faithful contendings in the spiritual conflict, but never at all for any worldly greatness and glory.¹ In his "Trialogus" he recognises, by implication, Urban VI., but in the "Supplement" he regards both "as monsters," as "incarnate devils."² Now Antichrist is the motto emblazoned on the banner which he carries with him into the thick of the battle. In the "Supplement" he says that "the Pope is the fountain and origin of all the wickedness in the Church, and that he is very Antichrist."³ The idea of Antichrist now becomes so common to him that he uses it as synonymous with the Pope. He speaks, for instance, of the Papal legates as sent from the side of Antichrist.⁴

The climax of opposition just described becomes intelligible when we consider the different stages by which he has gradually ascended to it. The violent outbursts, the vituperative epithets, collected from different parts of his writings, appear at first sight not to have a logical connexion with the subject, but to be the outpourings of a mind impressed with a deep sense of the iniquities, corruptions, and abuses of the Papal system. Accordingly, some of his enemies have not failed to attack him as one of those reckless fanatics who, without weighing well their words, enter on a fierce crusade against existing institutions.⁵ In

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 139.

² "Supplementum Trialogi," edit. Lechler, p. 423.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

⁴ "Polemical Works," p. xx.

⁵ Walsingham, "Hist. Ang.," i., 450, 451.

order to have a full idea of the mode of his opposition to the Papacy, we must consider the "Polemical Works," especially the tract, "De Christo et suo Adversario Antichristo," recently published from the Vienna manuscripts by the Wiclif Society, not expressed in the language of fanaticism, but full of a noble pathos which deeply touches us as we read them.¹ He gives scriptural proof that Peter cannot be the Vicar of Christ, in respect of having a special prerogative above the other disciples. He does not, without modification, identify the Pope with Antichrist or the devil, but lays down certain criteria by which Antichrist may be distinguished, and leaves the reader to infer that the Pope must be totally antagonistic to Christ, because he deceives in his words, works, and writings; because he displays worldly magnificence; because he is inflated with arrogance, and sends forth his armies, as we shall see in Chapter VII., to ravage and destroy; because, unlike Christ, who despised secular power, the Pope claims dominion over all earthly kingdoms; and because, while Christ was without pomp and ready to serve, the Pope has a magnificent Court, and demands homage even from the Emperor. Thus, then, he brings a heavy bill of indictment against the Papacy. Thus, in calm, decided, and persuasive language, he leads the reader irresistibly to the conclusion that the Pope is Antichrist, who arrogates to himself the attributes and prerogatives of Deity.

¹ Vol. i., pp. xviii.-xxii., and vol. ii., pp. 635-692.

We have thus seen Wiclif's two methods of attack. Never before had so loud a trumpet-blast been heard, summoning the nation to war with the Papal Antichrist. In variety of method, intensity of purpose, and burning zeal, he far surpassed those illustrious predecessors, William Ockham, Robert Grosseteste, Richard, Archbishop of Armagh, and others, who had begun the struggle with the Papacy. When he saw rival Popes anathematising each other, and sending forth their satellites to kindle the flames of war, we cannot wonder that, overmastered by his righteous indignation, he should have risen from one bold invective to another, and that he should have used more and more of the language of reproach and defiance. This now becomes with him an all-absorbing subject. In scientific works, in lectures intended for the learned, in sermons before the University or in his own parish of Lutterworth, he continued, during the last six years of his life, to lift up his voice against them, till he finished his testimony and entered his glorious rest.

We must now consider Wiclif's celebrated conflict with the Mendicant Orders. We shall see directly that there are good reasons for introducing it in connexion with this part of our subject. The idea of St. Francis of Assisi, and of St. Dominic who followed him, in binding their followers by a vow of poverty, was that they would recover for the Church of Rome the influence which she had lost through the avarice and opulence of the monks, and that, armed by their vow of poverty, they would not be seduced from

their allegiance by the promises or frowns of this world's potentates.

We have seen the vast influence gained by these Orders, and have just glanced at the loss of it and their subsequent degeneracy.¹ The temptation to violate the fundamental law of their founder became very soon so strong as to be absolutely irresistible. The feudal tyrant, to whose conscience they had administered an opiate which he was unwilling to receive at the hands of the secular clergy, requited them by tempting that cupidity which governs the conduct of the common herd of mankind. He would force upon a brotherhood, only too glad of an excuse for their forgetfulness of their vow of voluntary poverty, the advowson of some living, or a large estate rich in golden cornfields, or fertile meadows, or orchards bending beneath the weight of fruitage. Thus tempted themselves to abjure their vow, they soon began to tempt those who had possessions at their disposal to bestow upon them a portion of their wealth. Summoned to stand by the bedside of the noble who was dying in an agony of remorse,² they would, just as his eye was fixing itself upon vacancy, extort from him, as the price of his absolution, his consent to a deed disinheriting his lawful heirs, and conferring upon them a large estate which had descended to him through a long line of illustrious

¹ Pages 137, 138.

² "They beset the dying bed of the noble and wealthy in order to extort secret bequests from the fears of guilt or superstition." Matthew Paris, p. 541, ed. 1684.

ancestors. Thus we find that these holy beggars, who, like their Divine Master, had not, at first, where to lay their head, rivalled, nay, eclipsed the secular clergy in their sumptuous style of living, in their gorgeous vestments, in their richly-caparisoned pal-freys, in the decorations of their palaces, and in the pomp and state with which they were surrounded.¹

We find that the Pontiffs, being fully aware of the assistance which, in consequence of their influence with all classes, they were able to give them, had placed on their brows the episcopal mitre, conferred upon them their richest livings, employed them in difficult negotiations, and consulted them in all matters relating to the best interests of the Church. They had also the privilege of hearing confession and giving absolution without the licence of the episcopal Order; and they had also at their disposal an ample store of Indulgences with which the Pope had enriched them. Innocent IV. had granted to them a relaxation of the rule that they should not possess property, which was confirmed by Nicholas III. In consequence of these privileges, multitudes pressed forward, anxious to be enrolled in the fraternity. In fact, the Mendicant Orders had so enormously increased that Gregory X. found it necessary at the Council of Lyons, in 1272, to repress these extravagant swarms of holy beggars, and to confine the institution of Mendicants to the

¹ "Within the twenty-four years of their establishment in England, these friars have piled up their palaces to a royal altitude."—Matthew Paris, p. 541.

four orders of Franciscans (or Minorites), Dominicans (or Jacobites), Carmelites, and Hermits of St. Augustine.

We cannot wonder, therefore, that the hierarchy and secular clergy, whose province they had invaded, and whose hatred as well as envy they had excited by the privileges which had been conferred upon them, should have attacked them on account of their shameless abandonment of the fundamental principle of their founder. The dissensions between the two parties produced the most dreadful disturbances in Europe. This, however, was not the only charge against them. Fitz Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh (Armacanus), thus complains of them: — "I have in my diocese of Armagh about two thousand persons, who stand condemned for censures of the Church pronounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of which number scarcely fourteen have applied to me or my clergy for absolution; yet they all receive the sacraments as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars."¹ Their letters of fraternity, to which I shall refer directly, were another abuse which excited the anger of their opponents. They were covered with sarsnet, and written on fine vellum, illuminated; and they conveyed to the faithful purchaser an assurance of participation during life, and after death in the masses, vigils, and other religious

¹ "Discourse of Armacanus," in Foxe, "Acts and Mon.," i., 536-541.

exercises of the fraternity. They encouraged the inhabitants of the parishes into which they came to come to them for confession, asserting that from their superior knowledge of the human heart, and their superior skill in unravelling difficult questions of theology, they would prove better guides to them in their discharge of their duty than the parochial clergy. The consequence was a fearful increase of licentiousness, for the people were no longer obliged to blush before their ministers. For thus did they whisper one to another :—" Let us follow our own pleasure. Some one of the preaching brothers will soon travel this way, one whom we never saw before, and shall never see again ; so that, when we have had our will, we can confess without trouble and annoyance." In the reigns of Edward I., Edward II., and Edward III., they quite overran England, and created such disturbances that it was often necessary to issue warrants for their arrest.

They had succeeded in establishing themselves at Oxford. There they had become, as we shall see directly, very successful as the educators of youth. But the time of their popularity had now passed away. Richard Fitz Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh (Armacanus), who had been carrying on a conflict with them for many years, had arraigned them before the Pope, and had mentioned, among other causes of complaint, that their attempts to allure into their Order the youth of our Universities, had created so much alarm, that the number of students had been reduced from 30,000 to 6,000. The general opinion

hitherto has been that Wiclif continued this conflict of Fitz Ralph with the Mendicants. "Nothing," writes Mr. Le Bas, in his "Life of Wiclif," "seems better ascertained than the fact that, about the year 1360, he was notorious for standing foremost in that warfare which had for some time been carried on vigorously against the Mendicant Orders; and that his activity in the conflict first elevated him to that commanding rank in the public estimation which he never afterwards lost."¹ This opinion seems to have owed its origin to Anthony Wood and Lewis.² Dr. Shirley was the first to discover that this must have been an error. Referring to the statement of William Wodeford, one of Wiclif's contemporaries, that "before he was assailed publicly by the Mendicants as to the Sacrament of the altar, he had never interfered with them, but had often since made them the object of his attack," he observes:—"Of the story which connects him with the controversies of 1360 we are unable to trace the growth; it is implicitly contradicted by contemporary authority, and receives, to say the least, no sanction whatever from the acknowledged writings of the reformer."³ He was, however, unable, from the want of information, to do more than prove a direct negative to the tradition which had been transmitted to us.

A careful examination of the Vienna manuscripts has enabled Dr. Lechler to discover the missing

¹ Le Bas' "Life," p. 104.

Wood, "Antiquitates Oxonienses"; Lewis's "Life," pp. 6-9.

² "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xiv.

link in the chain of evidence. This is one of the great services which he has rendered to students of Wiclif literature. He shows us that, so far from opposing the Mendicants, he entertained, at first, a favourable opinion of them.¹ He made a great distinction, on account of their theory of poverty, between them and the "monks-possessioners," who had excited his indignation because they had surrounded themselves with piles of wealth. Thus we find in his treatise, "*De Civili Dominio*," quoted by Dr. Lechler, that "he even places St. Francis of Assisi with his mendicancy side by side with St. Peter and St. Paul, with their hand-labour, in opposition to the worldly possessions and honours of the clergy of his time."² And in another place he says that he considers that the Holy Spirit had inspired St. Francis and St. Dominic with the idea of establishing their Orders in order that, by means of them, they might effect a reformation in the Church. This view is corroborated by the Monk of St. Albans in the "*Chronicon Angliæ*," the contemporary authority already referred to. He writes, "From the love of eternal things he pretended that he despised things temporal, as fleeting and unstable, and therefore he would have nothing to do with the monks-possessioners, but that he might the more easily deceive the minds of the people, gave to the orders of the Mendicants, approving their poverty, and extolling their perfection."³ He saw, indeed, at Oxford, the signs of their degeneracy,

¹ Lechler's "*Life*," vol. ii., pp. 140-144. ² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

³ "*Chronicon Angliæ*," p. 116.

described in the petition of Armacanus to the Pope ; but still he clung to them, because they were in some respects men of a kindred spirit, and because they had achieved distinction in theology and in the work of education. "From early times," writes Professor Brewer, "the Franciscan found it necessary to devote himself to learning and the study of theology. He might have hoped to win the masses by descending to their social condition, by the services in hospitals. But his work was only half done. He found it necessary to enter into their moral and intellectual difficulties."¹ Thus it came to pass that those who had begun in poverty and opposition to learning, ended by having amongst their members some of the most subtle intellects of the age, who not only from the council board swayed the destinies of states and empires, but also in the University of Oxford became distinguished as schoolmen, and trained most successfully the students in the pursuit of knowledge and the investigation of truth.

We see then that for a time Wiclif might make common cause with the Mendicant Orders. But at length he came forward as their uncompromising antagonist. Lechler, however, does not seem to be quite right when, following Wodeford, he writes that he did not begin to attack till he was in the thick of the conflict as to the Sacrament of the altar. On the contrary, we find that he makes a fierce onslaught on the friars in the tract, "*De Officio Pastoralis*," the

¹ Brewer's preface to the "*Monumenta Franciscana*," in the *Rolls Series*, p. xlviii.

date of which cannot be later than 1378.¹ But there can be no doubt,—when we find him in the “*Dialogus*” placing “their blasphemous heresy” on the Sacrament of the altar in the forefront of his accusations against them,² and asserting in the tract on the “*Loosing of Satan*,” in the “*Polemical Works*,” that “they themselves must be accused of heresy, especially in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,”³—that the Eucharistic controversy had greatly exasperated him against them. We imagine, however, that the Papal schism was the chief cause of his indignation. They were the men to whom had been entrusted the administration of the funds for the crusade, to be described in the next chapter, the most effective instruments of the absolutism of the Papacy. He attacks them, for these among many other reasons, because they steal from parents those who ought to contribute to their support, exerting every effort to obtain lawfully or unlawfully as many members as possible; because they sell sermons and letters of fraternity, in which the devil teaches them to traffic with the faithful in order that they may add to their unlawful gains; because they assert that their prayers are of more avail than the prayers of our Lord; and that any one dying in their habit shall never come into condemnation. He makes a very strong attack upon them in his tract, “*De Diabolo et Membris*

¹ Matthew’s preface to “*Select English Works*,” p. xliii., pp. 429, 444, 445.

² “*Dialogus*,” Lechler’s edition, lib. iv., c. 34, p. 366.

³ “*Polemical Works*,” p. 398.

suis," "Concerning the Devil and his Members," in which he asserts that they are really "devils incarnate," because their so-called poverty is nothing else but a diabolical lie. It is based on sin, on greediness for wealth and robberies, and is an inspiration of the devil. Their pretension, too, that their begging is after the example and by the command of Christ, is another diabolical sin; for in strong contrast to this command of Christ is their longing for beautiful houses and churches.¹ But by promoting the crusade on behalf of Urban VI. in Flanders, to be described in the next chapter, they had quite filled up the measure of their iniquities. Thus he reaches in the "Polemical Works"² the point of anger with which we have long been familiar in the "Trialogus." This burning indignation against them on all these grounds seems to be concentrated in the somewhat fanciful epithet "Caim," written for "Cain," the first murderer, which he now constantly applies to them. The word is formed from the initial letters of the four orders, the Carmelites, Augustinians, Jacobites, and Minorites already referred to.³ They are called Caïnitæ, and their cloisters are called "Caim's Castles," which they erect and fill with the plunder which they have wrung from their fellow-country-

¹ "Polemical Works," pp. 139, 222, 252, 366.

² "Polemical Works," pp. 18, 19, 396. In different places Wiclif makes this a particular reproach to them. See Matthew, "S. E. W.," p. 495.

³ "Trialogus," iv., c. 33, p. 362.

men.¹ The idea seems to be that as the blood of Abel cried against Cain from the ground, so the blood of the souls which they have murdered is constantly bearing witness against them before the throne of Eternal Justice. I shall have some observations to make hereafter on the violence of his language. Meanwhile, I may observe that the constant appeal to Scripture against them, even when he forces it into an application to their heresies and sins, of which we have many instances in the "Polemical Works" and elsewhere, undoubtedly served to prepare the way for the Reformation, because it familiarised the minds of the people with the great truth that Holy Scripture is the arbiter of controversies.²

But they were not to be an unmitigated curse. They would hereafter be obliged to make some atonement for the wrongs which they had inflicted on the nations. "Rapt into future times," he writes, "I suppose that some brothers, whom God will be pleased to instruct, will return with all devotion to the primitive religion of Christ, and laying aside their unfaithfulness, and having obtained the consent of Antichrist, offered or solicited, will freely return to primitive truth, and will then build up the Church like the Apostle Paul."³ He seems here to be looking forward to Savonarola, the Dominican, who laboured

¹ "Supplementum Trialogi," c. 6, p. 437, and c. 8, p. 444; "Select Works," Arnold, iii., p. 348.

² See especially "Polemical Works," pp. 29-70.

³ "Trialogus," iv., 30, p. 349; Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., pp. 145, 146.

to cleanse the sanctuary of the Lord, above all to Martin Luther, the Augustinian, and his noble band of brothers of other Mendicant Orders, who, in the sixteenth century, shook to its foundation the usurped dominion of Romanism. Many parts of this remarkable passage are exactly applicable to Luther. "God was pleased to instruct him." We cannot read his history without seeing that God gradually enlightened his mind with the knowledge of heavenly truth, and thus qualified him to conduct the reformation of the Church to a successful issue. He appealed also to primitive truth in all his exhortations and instructions. He built up the Church like Paul, for he brought forward prominently the great doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ. Thus, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."¹ Dr. Lechler thinks that Wiclif, in fulfilment of our Lord's promise, "He will show you things to come,"² was controlled and directed by the Spirit of truth, when he wrote this remarkable passage. It is true, indeed, that this prediction was not fulfilled exactly in the sense present to the mind of Wiclif. But whether we agree with Dr. Lechler or not, we must surely regard it as a remarkable fact that one of the bitterest enemies of the Mendicant Orders should have had the prophetic presentiment that out of their ranks

¹ Judges, xiv., 14.

² John, xvi., 13.

should come forth those who were to be most effective instruments in the reformation of the Church.

Wiclif now came forward as a reformer in doctrine. His denial of Transubstantiation was the commencement of that great religious revolt which, to some extent suppressed, broke out again in the sixteenth century, and robbed the Pope of one province after another of his spiritual empire. The sagacity which led him, in the first instance, to make it the object of his attack, is manifest from the fact that when persecution came, at the Reformation, it raged around this dogma, as forming, by the consent of both parties, the foundation stone of the fabric of Romanism. With the aid of Scripture he had carefully studied the subject for a long time, especially since the papal schism which gave him freedom of action, and at last had come to the conclusion that it is condemned alike by reason and by revelation. In the summer of 1381 he published twelve short theses at Oxford, and challenged the members of the University to a public discussion on the subject. The following is the substance of them.¹ He asserts that the consecrated host which we see upon the altar is no part of Christ but a sign of Him ; that we cannot see Christ in it by the bodily eye, but by faith ; that it is in its own nature bread and wine, having, by virtue of the sacramental words, the true body and blood of Christ

¹ Only one manuscript of these conclusions is known to exist in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. A copy may be seen in Lewis, p. 318, and in "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 105.

at every point of it; that it is only in a figure the body and blood of Christ; and that the terms Transubstantiation, Identification, and Impanation, cannot be shown to have any foundation in the Word of God.

The publication of these theses produced an immense sensation at Oxford. It has been compared to the nailing up of Luther's 95 theses against Indulgences to the church door at Wittenberg. But Wiclif at this time occupied a much more difficult position than Luther. Frederick of Saxony was a very different protector from John of Gaunt. The former, when Luther made his celebrated attack, came forward without the least hesitation as his champion. He possessed, too, full power to defend him, because, in accordance with the provisions of the German constitution, the affairs of the Empire were administered by the Elector of Saxony during the vacancy occasioned by the death of the Emperor Maximilian. We know, also, that he carried him off from the enemies who were thirsting for his blood, and concealed him in the Wartburg amid the forests of Thuringia. But the case was very different with John of Gaunt. He was very willing to defend Wiclif when he made his bold attack on the wealth, pomp, and luxury of the clergy. But, as we shall see directly, he would not aid him when he came forward in opposition to the dogmas of the Church of Rome. The papal yoke, too, had pressed more heavily for some time before Luther's age on Germany than on any other part of the great European commonwealth.

The Popes had launched their spiritual thunderbolts against emperors and kings, because they refused to obey their arbitrary mandates. They had excited the subjects and even the kindred of the former to raise against them the standard of revolt. By the countless artifices, too, of the Roman Chancery they had drawn away more of its wealth from Germany than from any other country, which served to enrich ecclesiastics dwelling in ignoble ease in their marble palaces on the banks of the Tiber. But events showed that a large part of the hostility manifested to the Papacy was due to the residence of the Popes at Avignon. The nation was indignant because it imagined that the wealth which the Popes drained from this country was employed in aiding the efforts of her enemies against herself, and because, while coming forward as mediators, they were really the tools of France, for the advancement of her interests in every negotiation with England. But now, when these causes of enmity were removed, the people were quite inclined to bow down before the shrine, and to worship the idol with their old superstitious reverence. We must remember, too, that a gradual preparation had been made in Germany through the ages for the attack on the dogmas of the Church of Rome. We shall see hereafter that Luther was altogether incorrect when he asserted that Wiclif attacked the life and not the doctrine of the Church, and that he was himself indebted to him. From father to son the sacred flame, kindled by Tauler in the fourteenth century, had been transmitted. Men trained in his

school had prepared the way for the Reformation by leading men from a reliance on outward observances to an inward and spiritual life; by declaring that his own works make not a man holy, much less those of others; and by asserting that the intercession of the Virgin and saints is of no avail to the unrepentant sinner. Erasmus, too, prepared the way for Luther by an improved version of the Greek Testament, and by a better translation into Latin, by pouring the envenomed shafts of ridicule on the monks and the clergy, and by attacking the dogmas of the Papacy in his graver works, which were borne in large numbers on the wings of the press over Europe. The study of the ancient authors, too, invigorated the intellect, and led men to push their inquiries into that system of error which the Roman Catholic Church had imposed upon Christendom. In Luther's time many were to be found in all lands who lifted up their voices against the corruptions of the Papacy. The result was that, very soon after October 31, 1517, many in Germany crowded around the banner unfurled by the Reformer. But his preparation was wanting in the case of Wiclif. He occupied at this time a position of surpassing grandeur. It is true that, from the days of Paschasius Radbert, the author of the dogma of Transubstantiation in its present form, Bertram, Johannes Scotus, Berengarius, and others, had opposed it. But Wiclif was in a different position from them, as the dogma had been accepted as a dogma of the Western Church, by a Lateran Council, in the time of Innocent III. When he

first made his attack upon it, and afterwards, as we shall see, in quick succession, upon the other dogmas of the Papacy, he may be said to have stood alone against England in arms. The people would not follow their former favourite in his present attack upon the Papacy, for they were, as we have seen, reconciled to it, and shrank from doctrinal innovation. The clergy, too, would offer to him a determined opposition, because he denied them the power of working a miracle, which raised them above the highest and mightiest of this world's potentates.

The opposition just referred to was very soon manifested in Oxford. The Chancellor, William de Berton, called together a number of doctors of theology and law, to consider what should be done, because he felt that the Catholic faith was endangered, and that the honour of the University was compromised by the promulgation of these new dogmas.¹ The result was that two of the theses were selected, and declared to be erroneous, and that a mandate was issued directing that they should not be taught in the University of Oxford.²

This mandate was served upon Wiclif when he was engaged in propounding his views in one of the lecture-rooms of the beautiful Augustinian monastery at Oxford. Wadham College stands on the site of the building which was the scene of this memorable event. Wiclif seems to have been taken by surprise, but yet he at once declared that neither the Chancellor

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 109.

² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

nor his colleagues could refute his propositions. "Afterwards," said the Chancellor, "to give the plainer proof of his heresy, he publicly appealed from the condemnation of the Chancellor, and from the aforesaid judgment, not to the Pope, bishop, or ecclesiastical ordinary, but, like a heretic, leaning on the secular power for the defence of his error and heresy, to King Richard."¹ John of Gaunt at once came down to the University, and enjoined silence upon him. He was told that the king could not listen to his appeal. But he showed, by coming himself at this time to Oxford, that he considered the appeal reasonable. The Duke's object was to propitiate the clergy, for they had contributed largely to that celebrated poll-tax which led to the insurrection of the peasantry. Wiclif, however, presented an undaunted front to the adversary. He could no longer speak on this subject in the University, but he could educate the public. He published at once a tract called the "Wicket," written in strong, nervous English, and his celebrated confession, the "De Sacramento Altaris."² From the former we shall see when, in a future chapter, we consider his opinions, that we may obtain a good view of his teaching on the Eucharist. He avows his opinions with unabated courage. In the first, he prays that God would strengthen him with the grace of His Holy Spirit, that he may enter the straight gate, like Christ and His followers, and suffer persecution, even to the

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. 113, 114. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 115-132.

death, in defence of his opinions; and he proudly ends the last with these memorable words: "I believe that, in the end, the truth will conquer."

Soon after these memorable events occurred that terrible insurrection of the peasantry, perhaps one of the most portentous phenomena in our history. His adversaries would have been more than human if, when they were in conflict with him on the question of Transubstantiation, they had neglected to attribute it to the revolutionary principles which he was supposed to have propagated. The accusation was brought against him by one John Ball, of whom I shall speak directly when I vindicate him from the charge. There were two pretexts for this revolt. One of the grievances was villenage and villein service. The villein had become free—free to cultivate his land, free to find the best market for his labour. On this hopeful state of things the great pestilence descended like a blight. It made labour scarce; but there was no prospect of better wages, as the Statute of Labourers enacted that he shall take the wages which were accustomed to be taken in the neighbourhood two years before the plague began. Now, corn had risen so much that a day's labour at the old wages would not have purchased wheat enough for a man's support. The villeins ignored the statute, and the landlords fell back on their old rights over them.¹ John Ball, "the mad priest of Kent," as Froissart calls him, had, for twenty years before this time, been

¹ Stubbs' "Constitutional History," vol. ii.

engaged in inciting them to rebellion. He was the first who declaimed eloquently on the rights of man :—
 “Our lords have leisure and fine houses ; we have pain and labour, the rain and wind in the fields. They have wine and spices, and fine bread ; and we, oat-cake and straw, and water to drink. And yet it is of us and of our toil that these men hold their state.” He expressed the concentrated essence of rebellion in those well-known words :—

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,
 Who was then the gentleman ? ”¹

Thus this popular demagogue strove to fan the embers into a flame. Upon the minds of men, thus prepared for rebellion, the unfortunate poll-tax levied by Government acted like a spark upon the withered grass. Thus the misdoings of the Court and the mismanagement of the war were brought prominently before the people. The great grievance connected with this tax was, that the poorest man had to pay as much as the richest nobleman. Acts of resistance to overbearing tax-collectors were quite enough to lead to a rebellion. The immediate causes were the resistance made to a collector by a baker at Fobbing, in Essex, and the insult offered by another collector to the daughter of a tile-burner at Dartford, whom the angry father slew with one of his tools. Crowds of peasants, armed with clubs, rusty swords, and

¹ Green's "History of the English People," pp. 237-247 ; and M. Wallon's "Richard II.," the best modern work on his reign.

bows, assembled in the eastern counties. A party of them crossed the Thames under Jack Straw, and summoned Kent to arms. The insurgents entered Canterbury, which flung wide its gates to receive them, plundered the Archbishop's palace, and released John Ball from his prison. One hundred thousand Kentish men gathered around Wat Tyler, who was soon recognised as the head; mingled with them were those who held the doctrines of social and religious anarchy. Jack Straw was, probably, one of the Fraticelli. He looked forward to the glorious time when the Mendicants should possess the whole earth.¹ The rebellion spread like a conflagration among the trees of the forest. Norfolk and Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire rose in arms. Meanwhile the Kentish men were marching on London. The young king, then sixteen, addressed them from a boat on the river. On the refusal of Archbishop Sudbury and the Council to allow him to land, they rushed on to London. Very soon the palace of John of Gaunt in the Savoy, and the new Inn of the lawyers in the Temple, were soon lying a blackened mass of ruins on the ground. The insurgents, on the next day, forced their way into the Tower, and in the face of the terror-stricken knights, who did not offer the least resistance, dragged Archbishop Sudbury from the sanctuary and beheaded him on Tower Hill. The king met the

¹ See Petition of the four Mendicant Orders to John of Gaunt, "Fascic. Zizan," p. 292.

mass of the peasants the next day at Mile-end. "I am your king and lord," he exclaimed, with that fearlessness which marked his conduct throughout the crisis; "what will ye?" "We will that you free us for ever," shouted the multitude, "us and our lands, and that we never be named nor held for serfs." "I grant it," said Richard; and he bade them go home, promising them charters of freedom. The king, the next day, met accidentally, in Smithfield, a party of the insurgents, who were waiting to be sure of the fulfilment of the royal promise. Walworth, the mayor of London, thinking that Wat Tyler meditated violence as he advanced towards Richard, struck him with a dagger and killed him. The death of Tyler gave courage to the nobles, and robbed the action of the people of concert and decision. The knights and burghers were soon able to scatter in ignominious flight the remainder of the undisciplined rabble arrayed against them. Parliament afterwards declared that the king's letters patent were null and void without their consent. "And this consent," they ended, "we never have given, and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

We must now notice the charge brought against Wiclif by John Ball, that he had instigated the peasants to revolt. Ball made a confession before his execution to his judges, that he had been for two years a disciple of Wiclif, from whom he had learnt the doctrines which he taught, especially on the subject of the Lord's Supper, and that his itinerant preachers had promised not to desist from their work

till they had propagated his doctrines through the country.¹ Now this document was not drawn up till forty years after his death. Besides, he had begun his career as a political agitator, as we have seen, at least twenty years before this time, while Wiclif was living in comparative obscurity at Oxford. He could not, besides, have learnt the doctrine on the Sacrament of the altar from Wiclif; for when he began to teach it he was in the prison from which the insurgents delivered him. We notice, also, an absence of the accusation from the articles charged against Wiclif. We cannot, too, believe that Wiclif, the deadly enemy of the Mendicant Friars, would have sanctioned a movement, one of the designs of which was, according to the statement of one of its prominent leaders—Jack Straw—"to exterminate all landholders, bishops, landed monks, and parish priests." "Only the Begging Friars," he adds, "would have remained in the land, and these would have been sufficient to keep up divine service."² We may, therefore, believe Wiclif when he calls it a "lamentable conflict," and defends his followers from the charge of disseminating a spirit of anarchy;³ and must attribute the rebellion to the determination of the people, if possible, to shake off the yoke of the oppressor, and to obtain that liberty which is their inalienable birth-right.

William Courtenay, Bishop of London, had

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 274.

² Lechler's "Life," v. i., p. 229.

³ "De Blasphemia."

ascended the archiepiscopal throne over the headless trunk of Archbishop Sudbury. He had a strong dislike to Wiclif, as we have seen, on account of his supposed revolutionary dogmas, of which he fancied that he saw an exemplification in the recent insurrection. To these were now added his doctrinal errors. Still we may accept Dr. Shirley's opinion,¹—“Whatever share old party feeling may have had in stirring Courtenay's theological zeal, no Archbishop of Canterbury, even if inclined, could safely have neglected to proceed against the author of opinions so profoundly at variance with the ecclesiastical, even more than with the theological principles of the day.”

Courtenay had been nominated to the see of Canterbury in October, 1381, but he delayed action till he had received the pallium from Rome on May 6th, 1382. He now took a wise course for the attainment of his end. He summoned a Council, or rather a Committee of divines, on which all parties in the Church were represented, to consider the obnoxious tenets. The first assembly was held on the 21st of May, 1382, in the Chapter House of the Dominican monastery at Blackfriars. The office of the *Times* newspaper stands upon its site. They had no sooner taken their seats than the building was shaken by an earthquake, the shock of which was felt through the country. The Archbishop, observing the consternation which prevailed, with ready wit turned it to

¹ “Fascic. Zizan.,” p. xliii.

their own advantage. He said, in a solemn tone, "Brethren, the living God is arousing you to bestir yourselves in the cause of the Church. By a mighty effort the earth is purging itself of noxious vapours, foreshowing that this realm must purge itself of heresy, though it will not be without struggle and commotion."¹

This earthquake seems to have excited universal consternation in the nation. Men thought that God had come out of his secret place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. This feeling is very strongly expressed in one of the political songs of the day:²—

"For sothe this was a Lord to drede,
So sodeynly made mon agast ;
Of gold and selver thei tok non hede,
But out of ther houses ful sone thei past.
Chaumbres, chymeneys, al to-barst,
Chirches and castelles foule gon fare ;
Pinacles, steples, to grounde hit cast ;
And al was for warnyng to be ware."

Courtenay took advantage of the feeling, and proclaimed a solemn procession. On May 30th, high and low, rich and poor, arranged according to their condition of life, walked barefoot through the streets of London. He intended this demonstration as an act of penitence for the lukewarmness of the Bishops in banishing heresy from the realm. They were met at the gates of St. Paul's by the Bishop of London

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 272.

² Wright's "Political Poems," vol. i., p. 251.

and the cathedral clergy. Dr. John Cunningham then ascended the pulpit at Paul's Cross, and spoke with great solemnity against the errors of Wiclif. He said that the Council had pronounced nine of the theses submitted to it to be heretical and fifteen to be erroneous. The heretical propositions were stated to be that there is no change in the substance of bread and wine ; that priests and bishops forfeit their power by deadly sin ; that auricular confession is unnecessary ; that clerical endowments are unlawful ; and that God ought to obey the Devil. On the last proposition some observations have already been made.¹ The other heretical propositions were that it hath no foundation in the Gospel that Christ did ordain the mass ; that if the Pope be an evil man he has no power over the faithful in Christ ; that after Urban VI. none is to be received as Pope ; and that it is against Scripture that ecclesiastical persons should have temporal possessions. The erroneous propositions which he brought before them had reference to the external order of the Church. They related to excommunication, the office of teaching, Church property, and monastic orders, and prayers offered by prelates for particular persons. At the conclusion of his sermon, in solemn tones, he denounced as heretical all those who should defend these errors both now or hereafter.²

The policy of Courtenay had been to procure a formal condemnation of his errors, and afterwards a condemnation of those who would not renounce them. He found, however, that he must rely on the

¹ Page 75.

² John Foxe, "Acts," &c., iii., 37.

arm of the State to give effect to the decrees of the Council. To him belongs the disgrace of having begun the attempt to make legal that persecution for conscience sake, the history of which may be seen traced in characters of blood in our national annals. He induced the House of Lords to consent to an ordinance on May 26th, the end of which is thus expressed:—"It is ordained and assented in this present Parliament that the king's commissions be made and directed to the Sheriffs and other ministers of our sovereign lord the king, or other sufficient persons learned, . . . to arrest all such preachers, and also their fautors, maintainers, and abettors, and to hold them in arrest and strong prison till they will justify them according to the law and reason of holy Church."¹

This so-called statute was obtained in a surreptitious manner, without the consent of the House of Commons, which in fact protested against it, and procured its repeal in November, 1382. The Archbishop, however, probably foreseeing that a remonstrance would be made, had procured a royal patent, dated June 26th, enabling the bishops, by the hands of their own officers, to imprison those who dared to think for themselves in the most important matters which can occupy the attention of a rational and immortal being. It is directed especially against the

¹ Some excellent observations on these proceedings, and on this commencement of the Inquisition in England," may be seen in "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor Burrows, pp. 115, 118. Gibson's "Codex," i., 399.

"poor priests," and conveys to the Archbishop and his suffragans special plenary power to imprison the preachers and defenders of the condemned theses, and to detain them either in their own or other prisons, at their pleasure, and until they give proofs of repentance and make recantation.

Armed with this authority, Courtenay proceeded to action. He issued a mandate on May 30th to the Bishop of London, and through him to the Bishop of Lincoln, in whose diocese Lutterworth was at that time situated, and to the other bishops, to the effect that they shall prohibit every one from teaching or preaching the theses on which the Council had pronounced a distinct condemnation.¹ The University of Oxford must now be compelled to submit to the authority of the Archbishop. Wiclif was at this time residing at Lutterworth. He had, however, many friends in Oxford, who were engaged in propagating his opinions. The fear of interference from without had produced a reaction at Oxford favourable to him. The result had been the election of a Chancellor, Robert Rugge, who, if not favourable to Wiclif, was a zealous guardian of the privileges of the University. He was supported by Dr. Nicolas Hereford, and by Dr. Philip Repyngdon, who had made common cause with Wiclif, and had boldly defended him in sermons. Archbishop Courtenay, having been informed that Repyngdon was to preach at the cemetery of St. Frideswide on the Feast of Corpus Christi, and that the fear was entertained that he would allude to

¹ Wilkins's "Concilia," iii., 158, f. .

Wiclif's dogma, issued a commission to Peter Stokes, the Carmelite, who more than any one else had opposed the Wiclifites at Oxford, to publish before the sermon the sentence of condemnation of Wiclif's views passed at the Synod of the Earthquake.¹ He also directed the Chancellor, in two successive letters, to assist him. Rugge at first determined to resist this arbitrary mandate, but at length he gave way, as he found that Courtenay was supported by the authority of the Crown. But he adopted an effectual way of defeating his object. He knew that Stokes was a timid man, and he played upon his fears. He paraded the streets with a hundred men in complete armour. They openly declared that they would kill the Carmelite, or at least compel him to leave the town. He afterwards was present with the Proctors and the other University authorities at the cemetery of St. Frideswide, where Repyngdon was appointed to preach. His sermon was so violent that it was quite evident that his object was to intimidate Stokes. After the sermon, the Chancellor entered the church of St. Frideswide, accompanied by twenty men, having arms concealed beneath their gowns. Stokes, apprised of their presence by the clanking of their armour, did not venture to leave the sacred edifice, and no publication took place that day.² Afterwards, he told the Archbishop, that he saw Repyngdon and the Chancellor, on leaving the Church, smiling at the success of what they considered a good practical joke.

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. 297.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 299, 300.

The Chancellor, however, kept up the appearance of deference to the mandate of the Archbishop. He fixed a day on which Repyngdon and Stokes should dispute in the Schools. On the day when Repyngdon disputed, the proceedings were conducted with perfect order. But when Stokes was preparing to defend the existing order of things, he looked up and saw before him twelve men arrayed in armour. He was panic-stricken, and thought that he should have been slain before he left the place.¹ The armour was covered with a gown, but was not, on this occasion, intended to be concealed. The result was that Stokes was so terrified that he stole out of Oxford, unperceived, on June 12th, reached London the same night, and told the Archbishop that he did not dare to execute his commission.² The Archbishop had seen through the whole manœuvre, and on the morning of that day had sent letters summoning him to Lambeth.

The Chancellor, apprehensive of the consequences, followed him to Lambeth. Evidence was given to show that he had favoured the Wiclif party. He was condemned for contumacy, and asked pardon on his knees, which was given to him on the intercession of William of Wykeham.³ He was then required to publish other mandates of the Archbishop in the University. He told the Archbishop that he would publish the first mandate, which required him not to permit any one hereafter to teach or hold these doctrines in the

¹ "Fascic. Zizan," p. 302.

² *Ibid.*, p. 304.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

University. But when another mandate was given to him, requiring him not only to publish the condemnation of the conclusions, but also to search the colleges and halls for suspected persons, and to compel them to abjure, he said that he could only do so at the risk of his life. "Then," said the Archbishop, "the University also fosters heresy, for it will not allow the publication of Catholic truth."¹

Rugge was strongly censured, on his return to the University, by the party with which he had hitherto acted. In order to regain their favour, he suspended one Henry Crump from academic functions, because he called the Wiclifites "heretical Lollards."² This name, of uncertain origin, began now to be applied to them. Crump lodged a complaint against him with the Archbishop. The latter immediately procured a royal warrant, under the great seal, to the Chancellor and Proctors, directing them not to molest Henry Crump, and ordering them to make an inquisition through the University for the disciples of Wiclif, and for the books of Wiclif and Hereford.³ The members did not resist this invasion of their privileges. They were afraid of identifying themselves with those who were supposed to be connected with the late insurrection. They might, too, stand out against an Archbishop. But they bowed down in solemn adoration before the "divinity" which "doth hedge a king." A reaction took place. The University suspended Hereford and Repyngdon. They appealed

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. 310, 311.

² *Ibid.*, p. 312.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 312-317.

to the Duke of Lancaster. He told them to abjure their heretical opinions. They were then obliged to humble themselves so far as to appeal to the Archbishop. He ordered them to prepare a statement of their opinions, and to submit it to himself, to ten bishops, and to many doctors of law and divinity, on Friday, June 20th, at the Dominican monastery at Blackfriars.¹ Their answers were pronounced to be evasive and heretical. Their sentence was, however, postponed for a week. When they failed to appear at the appointed place, they were laid under the ban of excommunication. Other persons were also brought before the Archbishop and other Bishops. The Bishops of London and of Lincoln, Robert Braybrooke and John Buckingham, distinguished themselves by their zeal in the work of persecution. The end, however, was that all of them recanted, with the single exception of Nicolas Hereford. He was cited to Rome, and was imprisoned. Repyngdon afterwards opposed the Wiclifites as strongly as he had supported them, and was rewarded for his apostasy with the bishopric of Lincoln.

Thus, then, armed with these extraordinary powers, Courtenay was completely successful in his crusade against Wiclifism in Oxford. But his triumph was gained at the expense of the intellectual life of the University. The Wiclifite party had studied the precious remains of ancient genius, not on account of the "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," to be found in the works of those masters of poetry,

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. 319-329.

eloquence, and song, who have shed an undying glory on the age and country in which they lived ; but that they might strengthen their intellectual powers, and be better enabled to persevere in the investigation of truth. The victorious party might have made use of the same materials for the same purpose ; but they would not do so on account of their association with those whom they had crushed. The result was intellectual imbecility throughout the University. In the thirteenth century, Oxford had sent forth sons who had attracted the regard of admiring Europe ; but in the great Councils of the Church in the fifteenth century, she was nowhere to be found. Wood gives the evidence of an Oxford contemporary :—"The University of Paris has laboured to find a remedy for the poisonous disease of schism ; but in her labours she has borne all alone the burden and heat of the day. Well might she complain of her sister (our mother) to the King of England, saying, 'Speak unto my sister, that she may labour with me. Let it not be said to our reproach, how long will ye hold your peace?'" Thus, then, Oxford suffered at the hands of Courtenay and his party, until at length, at the time of the Reformation, she broke her fetters, and once more stood in the van of the great movement against ignorance, error, and superstition.¹

But now the great heretic himself must be called to account. He had been suspended from academic functions by a mandate from Archbishop Courtenay.

¹ Huber's "English Universities," vol. i., pp. 155-158.

He now, in obedience to a summons, appeared before a Provincial Synod in St. Frideswide's Church, at Oxford, on November 18th, 1382, which was afterwards adjourned to the 24th. The fact of his appearance has been called in question, for it really rests only on the authority of the chronicler, Knighton, from whom Wood, who also mentions it, has evidently obtained his information. But still Knighton is so minute in his details, that it does not appear that any doubt can be entertained on the subject.¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London, Lincoln, Norwich, Winchester, Salisbury, and Hereford, constituted the tribunal. Around them was assembled a large number of clergy and laity. Before this imposing array stood the great Reformer. Nearly fifty years had passed away since he came, an unknown boy, to Oxford, anxious to devote the powers with which God had gifted him to the pursuit of knowledge, and to the investigation of truth. On that brow, time, or, rather, intense study, had marked deep furrows. He would be sustained, as he stood before his judges, by the assurance that his great object, during those years of toil, had been to serve God faithfully, and to do good in his day and generation. He would remember how he had come under the spell of the holier influences exercised upon him by the plague, and by the teaching and character of Archbishops Bradwardine and Fitz Ralph. He might have recalled, too, those party fights at Oxford, in which he had been trained for

¹ Lechler, vol. ii., p. 272.

his assault first of all on the corruptions of the Papacy, and afterwards on that vast system of error which, through ages, it had laboured to impose upon Christendom. Just after he had obeyed the voice which summoned him to the latter conflict, adverse influences had hindered him in his work. That terrible insurrection of the peasants had broken out, which had created a strong prejudice against him. The people were told, and they believed, that Heaven had declared its judgment in that earthquake which had sent a thrill of terror through the hearts of the inhabitants of England. Thus, then, the noble army of the Reformers had been compelled to retire before the fierce onset of the sons of darkness. Thus, too, it came to pass that there was little manifestation of sympathy with him in that numerous assemblage. He would wander back in thought to the time when the schools had resounded to the applause of admiring followers, who had hailed him as a victor in his intellectual combats. But persecution had robbed him of their sympathy. As he stood there alone, he had now to mourn over the apostacy of those who, he fondly hoped, would be faithful to their conscientious convictions. But, when gloom and doubt would have beset an ordinary mind, his courage remained unshaken. We know, indeed, that some, who ought not to have brought the charge against him, have asserted, with Knighton, that the English confession, which, Knighton says, that he delivered to the judges, is a retraction. But it is an undoubted historical fact, that no sen-

tence was passed upon him requiring that retraction. The silence of his adversaries as to the issue is evidence of it. When they pretended that he had made it, they were obliged to put forth that English confession to be referred to in Chapter VIII., in which he reiterates, in unmistakable language, his rejection of the dogma, while affirming, as we shall see, a real spiritual presence of Christ in the sacred elements.¹ He afterwards becomes more decided in his opposition to Transubstantiation and to the Papacy. The note of defiance to his adversaries rings out loudly in his public utterances, and in his works, to the end of his days, especially in his celebrated "Trialogus," written in the year before his death:—"Oh, that all could see how Antichrist and his instruments condemn sons of the Church, and persecute them even to the death, because they maintain the truth as taught in the Gospel! Truly aware am I that the doctrine of the Gospel may for a season be trampled under foot; that it may be overpowered in high places, and even suppressed by the threatenings of Antichrist; but I am sure that it will never be extinguished, for 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.'"²

He went forth unscathed from that formidable tribunal. The men who were thirsting for his destruction had not the courage to seize him. The

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 268. See also "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. iii., pp. 501-503.

² "Trialogus," lib. iv., 7.

truth was that they trembled before a superior tribunal. They were conscious that they had made the House of Commons their enemy by the high-handed manner in which they had endeavoured to dispense with its consent to a statute of the realm. His celebrated "Complaint," a petition which he now addressed to Parliament, served still more to enlist their sympathies in his cause.¹ He asserts that Parliament ought to release members of religious bodies, when they wish, from the fetters of monastic vows; and that the king has a perfect right to deal with the endowments of the Church when they have been abused. He also presented, in a short summary, the objections to Transubstantiation. This document, in which he claimed his right to hold these views, and asserted for others the liberty which he asked for himself, was well fitted to find acceptance with the representatives of the country. He appealed to the love of liberty which was strong within their breasts. He had not miscalculated the effect which that document was likely to produce on the legislature. He saved himself from imprisonment, that he might persevere in his exhausting studies and labours. A plainer proof was thus given, through his growth in knowledge, that he had prepared the way for the Reformation by opposing not only the corruptions but also the dogmas of Romanism. In short, we may say, that the work of those last two years has most powerfully aided in the deliverance of England from her spiritual bondage.

¹ Arnold's "Select English Writings," vol. iii., pp. 507-23.

CHAPTER VII.

WICLIF IN LUTTERWORTH.

The interest connected with Lutterworth. — His Herculean labours in it, including the writing of a large number of tracts and works against Rome. — The English of the tracts is remarkable. — The transcription of his works. He was a diligent parish priest at Lutterworth. — His views on the importance of preaching. — His sermons at Oxford. — His sermons at Lutterworth. — Probably described by Chaucer in his "Good Parson." — Bishop Spencer's crusade was strongly condemned by Wiclif. — He often thought that his life was in danger. — His citation to Rome. — His death. — His character and work.

WE have seen that Wiclif was appointed to the living of Lutterworth in 1374. He resided in the parish from the summer of 1381 to the time of his death. During the first six or seven years after his appointment, he divided his time between Lutterworth and Oxford. Afterwards his only absence from it was when he was summoned to appear before the Convocation at Oxford in 1382.

This town will always be an object of interest to those who have been taught to appreciate Wiclif, because his incumbency was signalised by that higher development, and by those services which have rendered him pre-eminently the benefactor of his native land. I have shown in Chapter II. that Archbishop Bradwardine may have been to him the

model of that union of study and contemplation with a life of action which he displayed during the latter part of his memorable career. Lutterworth was for nearly four years the only scene of those Herculean labours which may be said to have begun in 1378. He acted in conformity with his own words, that "as priests have the highest state of all, so God asks of them more perfect service; and idleness in priests is more to be condemned than in other men."¹ We are disposed at first to be incredulous when we hear of work which seems beyond the limits of human ability. But all modern research has served to confirm the accuracy of this statement. Dr. Shirley's catalogue contains a list of ninety-six Latin works and sixty-five English works of a theological, devotional, and philosophical character. Of those important writings, forming a large number in that list, in which he assailed the corruptions of Romish doctrine, the largest part issued from his parsonage at Lutterworth. Most of his tracts, written in terse English, varying in size from three or four pages to four sheets, designed for the instruction of the English people after he withdrew from Oxford, belong to these latest years of his life. "It is not," Professor Shirley says, "by his translation of the Bible, remarkable as that work is, that Wicliff can be judged as a writer. It is in his original tracts that the exquisite pathos, the keen delicate irony, the manly passion of his short, nervous sentences, fairly over-

¹ "On the Seven Deadly Sins," *Select English Works*, Arnold, vol. iii., p. 143.

masters the weakness of the unformed language, and gives us English which cannot be read without a feeling of its beauty to this hour."¹ The gigantic labour of translating the Bible would have been, we should have thought, enough to task his energies in his quiet parsonage. But we are full of amazement when we see, in addition to it, tract after tract, work after work coming forth from it, in which he inveighs against the vices and crimes of the bishops and clergy; or aids his poor priests in their work by explaining their objects and by defending them from the calumnies of their enemies; or discusses the duties which men owe to God or to each other; or assails the doctrines of Romanism as one after another he discovers them; or lashes with his thrice-knotted scourge the mendicant brothers; or, as increasing in vituperative energy, in the last year of his life, he directs his most powerful artillery against the Papacy, and assails the Pope as "The Master Antichrist."²

We cannot doubt that he had laid in materials for these works during the former part of his life. But still we reflect with wonder on the intense energy, extraordinary power, and resolute will of one who could thus labour for the spiritual and temporal interests of his fellow-creatures. We see him wearied in spirit and worn down by toil, not availing himself of the excuse of perils which he had only narrowly

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xlvi.

² "Polemical Works," published by the Wiclif Society, p. 396.

escaped for relaxing in his exertions, but disproving the charge of timidity and evasion which has been brought against him by braving again the fury of the persecutor, and showing a constantly increasing zeal in his opposition to the Papacy. He knew that the shadows of evening had fallen upon his path. "The night was soon coming for him when no man can work." He saw that his energies might have been better directed in former years of his life. Now, when he was better informed, and was on the right track, he was determined to make up for lost time. His labours, therefore, increase with advancing years. He lifted up his voice in louder tones against the corruptions of the dominant Church. His heart was throbbing with deep anxiety for his fellow-countrymen, whom he saw perishing in their iniquity. He resolved to labour with increasing energy for their salvation, and to bring back the Church to that primitive faith from which she had departed, animated by the prospect of the crown of righteousness which should be placed on his brow on that day, when "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Wiclif was aided by skilful transcribers. They must have been available at Lutterworth, or else we cannot suppose that his works would have found their way so quickly through the length and breadth of the land. Through these men, who often worked willingly for him, because they were in sympathy with him, a voice issued from Lutterworth, which shook

not only England, but many countries of Europe. In the palace of the king, among the silken band of courtiers, "in the perfumed chambers of the great," in the mansion of the knight, in the apartment of the tradesman or the merchant, in the rude hovels of the peasantry, Wiclif was present by his books, instructing the ignorant in the great truths of the Gospel, rekindling decaying zeal, fixing wavering resolutions, recovering those who had apostatised, and adding fresh soldiers to the ranks of his army.

But Wiclif, as I have said, combined with study and contemplation active exertions for the promotion of the best interests of the immortal beings around him. We know that, though he never became an itinerant preacher himself, yet he constantly superintended the movements of that band of poor priests who were at this time, as we have seen, actively engaged throughout the county of Leicester. Tradition, too, informs us that every morning, after he had been engaged in this exhausting work, clad probably, like his preachers, in his russet gown, with sandals on his feet, this man, who shook the pillars of the Papacy, on whom the eyes of the king, the Pope, statesmen, prelates, and priests were fixed, might be seen in Lutterworth, in the active discharge of his duties as a parish priest. He enters those rude dwellings and engages in friendly conversation with the inmates. If they are notorious offenders, he addresses to them words of warning or of exhortation. If they are suffering from sickness or sorrow, he pours the oil and wine of heavenly consolation

into the wounded spirit. If their spirits are about to quit their earthly tabernacle, he speaks to them words of peace and consolation, holding up before the agonised sufferer the symbol of redemption. He preached also to his flock by the silent eloquence of a holy life, remembering his own words, that they who live well, in purity of thought, and speech, and deed, and in good example to the people, who teach the law of God up to their knowledge, and labour to learn it better and to teach it openly and constantly, these are very prophets of God, and holy angels of God, and the spiritual lights of the world."¹

But we must visit the church at Lutterworth, the same in which he officiated. We must stand in front of that pulpit, parts of which belong to the pulpit which the Reformer occupied. We must then carry back our minds to those days and fancy that we see the flock whom he has visited during the week, listening with eager attention to those sermons preserved probably by Purvey, extracts from which have been published by Vaughan, or in full by Mr. Arnold in the select works of Wiclif. These are very numerous. They are his written preparations for the pulpit, or consist of notes taken from his lips as a preacher. We shall not expect to find him following the example of those who, in their sermons, make use of jokes and drolleries, act the part of buffoons, tell scandalous stories, preach fables instead of the

¹ "For the Order of the Priesthood," cited by Vaughan, vol. ii., p. 295.

Gospel, and even draw the materials of their sermons from the mythology of the heathen deities. He has strongly censured these men in various passages of his works.¹ But, as the following passages will show, he considered the preaching of the pure word of God, in a style free from ornament, to be the great means, by God's blessing, of the salvation of the soul; and to it he attaches paramount importance. "The right preaching of God's word is the most worthy work that priests do here among men. . . . Also the goodness of works is measured by the fruit that cometh of them; but more fruit cometh of good preaching than of any other work. And, therefore, such good preaching is the best work that a priest doeth; for by this work a priest begets children to God, and maketh them to come to heaven. Hence St. Paul saith, 'In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.'"² In reflecting on the truth, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke viii. 11), he is filled with wonder and exclaims, "O marvellous power of the Divine seed! which overpowers strong men in arms, softens hard hearts, and renews and changes into divine men, men who had been brutalised by sins, and who had departed infinitely far from God. Obviously such a high morality could never be worked by a priest, if the Spirit of Life,

¹ "Trialogus," p. 436; "Polemical Works," p. 372; "Select English Works," Matthew, pp. 16, 26, 50, 59.

² "De Officio Pastoralis," in English Works, edited by Matthew, p. 441.

and the Eternal word did not, above all things else, work with it."¹

Under the influence of these convictions, he had often addressed himself in Latin sermons, in a learned style, to men of culture and scholastic knowledge probably from the pulpit of St. Mary's,² in the University of Oxford. Many of these are to be found at Vienna. He had laboured in that sphere of duty to develop and foster the spiritual life of his hearers, to suggest remedies for the evils which afflicted the Church, and so to prepare many of his hearers who would probably go everywhere preaching the word to promote the spiritual and temporal interests of those who should be committed to their charge.³

Now he speaks in earnest, simple, forcible, and energetic language to his rustic congregation at Lutterworth. His opinion was, that "the ornamental speech on which men so pride themselves, is so little in keeping with the subject of God's word, that the latter is corrupted by it, and its power paralysed for the conversion and regeneration of souls."⁴ We may here observe that he anticipated the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and prepared the way for them by asserting that the preaching of God's Word is the

¹ This is an extract from a Latin sermon on Luke viii. 4-15, the Gospel for Sexagesima Sunday, given by Lechler in vol. ii., pp. 347-357.

² Nicholas Hereford ("Fascic. Zizan.," 305) is described as having preached in Latin from that pulpit.

³ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., pp. 283, 284. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

great instrument of the moral and spiritual regeneration of Christendom. A careful examination of his sermons will serve to show us that his great motives are the love of Christ, and an ardent desire for the promotion of God's glory in the salvation of his ignorant and perishing fellow-creatures. He would at one time assail, as we shall see in the next chapter, the fundamental doctrines of Romanism, priestly absolution, Indulgences, prayers to Saints, or similar forms of error. He would then tell his hearers that "We should know that faith is a *gift* of God, and that it may not be given to men except it be *graciously*. Thus, indeed, all the good which men have is of God, and accordingly, when God rewardeth a good work of man, *he crowneth his own gift*. This, then, is also of grace, even as all things are of grace that men have according to the will of God."¹ Again he would insist upon the importance of the atonement, in a sermon preached by him on a Christmas Day, and on the passage in Isaiah ix. 6, beginning with the words "Unto us a child is born." "*It is to speak lightly to say that God might, of his mere power, forgive this sin without the atonement which was made for it, since the justice of God would not suffer this, which requires that every trespass be punished either on earth or in hell. God may not accept a person, to forgive him his sin without an atonement, else he must give free licence to sin, both in angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and our God were no God.*"² He would in other

¹ "John de Wycliffe, a Monograph," by Vaughan, p. 399.

² *Ibid.*, p. 395.

sermons not confine himself to subjects immediately connected with his own flock, but would take a wider range. He would dilate on such subjects as the rights of property, he would assail in his usual strong language the Mendicant Orders, or he would dwell on any other public event of so much importance as to have penetrated to that remote parish in Leicestershire. But in these, as well as in more important matters, we find that the Word of God is the supreme authority by which he is guided to a correct and certain conclusion.

But some of his most solemn and heart-searching appeals are connected with the day of judgment. In a sermon on the Second Sunday in Advent, an extract from which is given by Dr. Lechler, he thus addresses his congregation:¹ "Faith in earnest in this third coming of Christ ought to draw away men from sin and attract them to virtue. For if they had to appear to-morrow morning before an earthly judge, and might either win or lose great revenues as the result, they would surely prepare themselves with all diligence for the trial. How much more so if they were to win or to lose their life itself! Lord, as we are certain of this, that the day of the Lord will come, and we know not how soon, and as judgment will then pass upon us, to adjudge us either to life in heaven, or to everlasting death in hell, how diligent do we behove to be to make ready for the event!"

In making these appeals, he would have been

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. i., p. 297.

aided by a remarkable fresco over the chancel arch of Lutterworth Church, representing the Day of Judgment. The Saviour is seen seated on a rainbow in the centre, having two angels with trumpets on either side of him. The ground is covered with bones and skulls, the mournful relics of mortality, designed to represent those who have not received Christian burial. All grades of life, from the king to the rude peasant, are seen emerging from their graves, the particles of dust having been, at the sound of the trumpet, just knit together in the very same bodies in which they lived and moved, it may be, several thousand years before. Fire is seen bursting from some of the coffins, which are gradually pouring forth their occupants. We may imagine that he endeavoured to give to his hearers his own realising sense of the solemnities of that day, expressed in those words, "Whether I eat or drink, I think that the angel's trumpet sounds in mine ears, and bids me rise to judgment,"¹ as, directing their attention to that fresco, he asks them whether they can be vain, and gay, and dissipated, and worldly-minded, when they have heard the trumpet which wakes the dead, and changes the living, sounding through creation, and seen the quickened myriads of mankind standing before the judgment-seat.

We cannot conclude this description of the work at Lutterworth without those lines of the poet Chaucer, in which it is commonly supposed to be represented:—

¹ "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. iii., p. 173.

“ But rich he was of holy thought and work.
He was also a learned man—a clerk,
That Christes gospel truly would preach,
His parishens devoutly would he teach;
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversite full patient.
And such he was yproved ofte sithes (times),
Full loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
But rather would he given out of doubt,
Unto his poor parishiens about
Of his offering, and eke of his substance,
He could in little things have suffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses far asonder,
But he ne leste nought for rain ne thunder;
In sickness nor in mischief, to visit
The farthest in his parish, much and lit (great and small)
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he gaf (gave),
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught.”

If we suppose Chaucer to be fixing his thoughts on Wiclif as a parish priest, and not as a man of might, who could grasp and hurl the thunder, we have in this portrait several features which may be found in his character. We have his learning, his faithful preaching of the Gospel, his holy life, which was a sermon to his parishioners, his faithfulness in the discharge of his parochial duties, even when the thunder was pealing above him, his humility, his patience in adversity, his unselfishness, and his compassionate love which led him to minister to the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of the destitute and afflicted around him. Chaucer, though he showed that he was the reverse of Wiclif, by extracting amusement from licentious themes, yet could not fail to appre-

ciate his virtues and excellences. He could agree, too, with him in opposing the corruptions of the Papacy ; for he has lashed the Mendicant Friars, has satirised the Pardoner who trafficked in spiritual wares, and has a mocking laugh for the vices of the clergy, which he exposes in all their naked deformity. But, by speaking with reverence in his later works of Confession and Transubstantiation, he showed that he had no sympathy with that higher development of Wiclif which led him to wage a ceaseless warfare with the doctrinal system of the Papacy.

In the midst of his parochial and public cares, the sadness of his noble spirit was deepened by finding that as yet his efforts on their behalf had not produced much impression on the large body of his fellow-countrymen. Bulls had gone forth from Rome, directing an expedition to be organised in England against Clement VII. and his supporters on the continent of Europe, but especially in France. A mitred prelate, Henry Spencer, the youthful Bishop of Norwich, was appointed to the command of the army. He had distinguished himself in the insurrection of the peasants, when, as the chronicler informs us, "grasping his lance in his right hand, burying his spurs in the flanks of his horse, rushing with the fury of the wild boar into the midst of the crowd," this mail-clad ambassador of the Prince of Peace had spread confusion and slaughter around him.¹ The Pope had placed an

¹ Walsingham, pp. 278, 279.

ample store of Indulgences at the disposal of the bishop; and the archbishop had issued letters directing that prayers should be offered up for the success of the Crusade, and that contributions, to which was annexed the promise of absolution from the guilt and punishment of sin, should be invited towards an enterprise which had for its object the extermination of the heretics. The result was that gold, silver, jewels, ornaments, rings, silver spoons, and dishes, contributed especially by ladies of high rank, were poured into the war-chest of the Crusaders. It would be foreign to my purpose to give a detailed account of this expedition. Suffice it to say that the warlike prelate proved a very unskilful general. The Crusaders invaded Flanders, captured several towns, and, far surpassing the ordinary inhumanity of the times, cut to pieces the inhabitants of two of them in one vast massacre. The bishop, elated by this success, thought that he would measure his strength with the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy, who were advancing against him. But he retired ignominiously before them, and, having lost all his acquisitions, embarked for England, where he was received with a universal shout of execration.

Wiclif was inflamed with a holy indignation when he was informed of this unhallowed enterprise. He complains in "The Great Sentence of the Curse Expounded," "that the proud Priest of Rome brings the seal or banner of Christ on the cross,—that is the token of peace, mercy, and charity,—for to slay all Christian men for love of two false priests that be

open Antichrists, for to maintain their worldly state to oppress Christendom worse than the Jews were, against Holy Writ and the life of Christ and his Apostles.”¹ The matter so agitated his mind that he often returns to it. He says, for instance, in the treatise on the “Seven Deadly Sins,” “The Pope, who is the stirrer up of this strife, sins more than the fighters;” and asks, indignantly, “Why, is he not a fiend? The priests that fight in his cause sin foully in homicide; for, if man-slaying in secular men be odious to God, much more in priests, that should be Christ’s vicars.”²

Wiclif had fully counted the cost, and weighed the consequences, of this bold invective against the Papacy. He was, in the latest years of his life, constantly haunted with the impression that his life was in danger. He says, for instance, in “The Trialogus,” “We have no need to go among the heathen in order to die a martyr’s death. We have only to preach persistently the law of Christ in the hearing of Cæsar’s prelates, and instantly we shall have a flourishing martyrdom, if we hold out in faith and patience.”³

Dr. Lechler regards as groundless Wiclif’s alleged citation to Rome by Pope Urban VI., because he can discover no evidence of it in the chroniclers of the period, and because it rests, he says, entirely on an alleged letter to the Pope in answer to the summons.

¹ “Select English Works,” Arnold, vol. iii., p. 308.

² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³ “Trialogus,” lib. iii., c. 15, p. 181.

He has been successful in showing that this is not a letter, and that it is not addressed to the Pope ; but he is mistaken in supposing that he was not cited to Rome.¹ We have a distinct assertion in one of the Polemical works, "*De Citationibus Frivolis*," recently published by the Wiclif Society, that he was summoned to appear before the Pope. He mentions, among other matters connected with citations, three reasons for disregarding them, which are necessary obstacles, illness, and the command of the king ; and lays claim to all these for himself. His words are : "Thus says a certain lame and infirm man, cited to this court, that the royal command prevents him from going to Rome, that the King of Kings plainly decrees that he should not go."² Thus, then, the fact of the citation is established beyond the possibility of a doubt. Internal evidence, gathered from this tract, shows that he was cited about the end of 1383.

Perhaps, if Wiclif had gone to Rome, and had died in one of the Papal dungeons, his fame as a martyr might have done something for him with posterity. An effort might then have been made to answer the accusations of his adversaries, and to free his views from the perplexity in which they have been involved, partly because incorrect dates have been assigned to some of his works, and partly because works have been assigned to him which he never wrote, so that the charge, stated in the preface, could not have been brought against his native country, that "it has

¹ Lechler's "*Life*," vol. ii., pp. 284, 285.

² "*Polemical Works*," pp. 555, 556.

been singularly and painfully ungrateful to his memory." But it was not so to be. "Admirable it was," says Fuller, "that a hare so often hunted, with so many packs of dogs, should die at last, quietly sitting in his form."¹ His infirmities had compelled him, for two years before his death, to employ the services of a curate, John Horn. John Purvey was also his constant attendant, and aided him in his work. John Horn informs us that he was struck with paralysis two years before his death. Perhaps his enemies had adopted a timid policy towards him, because they saw that death had set its seal on that wasted frame, and would soon release them from his hostility. At length the end came. His curate, John Horn, has given us a full account of the circumstances connected with his death.² On Innocents' Day, December 28th, 1384, as he was hearing mass in his church at Lutterworth, at the time of the elevation of the host, he was struck with paralysis, and sank immediately to the ground. In the old chancel, which has lately been replaced by one built on the

¹ Fuller, p. 142.

² When Horn was eighty years of age, in the year 1441, he made a solemn asseveration to the effect here stated, to Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, which the latter wrote out with his own hand. The MS. is in the British Museum. Lewis (p. 336) gives a copy of it. Another testimony is found in the following entry in the Episcopal Register of Lincoln, in connexion with an inquiry in 1385 as to the right of presentation to the living. "This church of Lutterworth became vacant on the last day of the past year (1384) by the death of John Wycliff, the last rector."—Lewis, c. v.

same lines, his last illness came upon him. He was carried in the chair, still standing in it, to the parsonage-house, where, soothed by the kind offices of surrounding friends, he breathed his last on December 31st, 1384. He may have been conscious during that interval, and may have looked forward with joy to the prospect of his appearance in the presence of his Saviour. The tongue, however, which might have expressed a well-grounded hope of a happy eternity, and might have conveyed his thanks to his friends for their assiduous attention, had been, from the time of his seizure, silenced for ever. Afterwards his body was borne back to that old church in which he had so often stood, the teacher of his rustic parishioners, and was placed in a vault within the chancel, where it remained till, as we shall see, some years afterwards, the sanctity and repose of the grave were violated by the malice of his enemies, and his bones were rudely torn from their resting-place.

Thus ended the career of one who has been justly described by Dean Hook as "one of the greatest men that our country has produced; as one of the very few who have left the impress of their minds, not only on their own age, but on all time."¹ His indefatigable energy, a distinguishing feature of his character had gradually worn out the material tabernacle. No friend has left us a record of his life. We have only some scanty but significant fragments as to his appearance and influence. We

¹ "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iii., p. 76.

learn that he had a "spare, frail, and emaciated frame, and 'a conversation most innocent,' the charm of every rank."¹ He must have been singularly attractive in his manner, or he could never have secured the regard of the king, of the turbulent nobility of the Court of Edward III., or of that band of faithful friends and disciples who were most zealous in propagating his opinions. We know, also, that, as a man of intellect and learning, he was, like Homer's hero, taller by head and shoulders than the most gigantic of his civil and ecclesiastical contemporaries. Archbishop Arundel admits him to have been "a mighty clerk." We have already seen that he must have possessed great scientific knowledge,² and that to his command of the weapons of scholastic discussion he owed that influence with his contemporaries which aided him very much in his efforts for the reformation of the Church. "Duns Scotus, Ockham, Bradwardine, and Wiclif were the four great Schoolmen of the fourteenth century."³

We know, also, that his personal character was unimpeachable. His nobility of spirit, his sanctity of life, his superiority to the sordid and debasing pursuits and pleasures of the world inspired the respect of his contemporaries. His enemies have, indeed, assailed him with vituperative epithets. But they have not uttered a syllable against his personal character. They have called him "the organ of the devil, the enemy of the Church, the mirror of hypo-

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xlv.

² Page 23.

³ *Ibid.*, p. li.

crites, the fabricator of lies," "John Wyke-bileve (wicked belief)," "Wiclyffe, of wicked life, of memory thrice condemned."¹ They have charged him, also, with cowardice and evasion. The charge has been repeated by some who profess to appreciate him. Those who have read carefully this life of him will say that it ought not to have been made. We ought to admire his courage at Oxford, for reasons already given, when, on the question of Transubstantiation, he flung down the gauntlet, and challenged the ecclesiastical body to mortal combat.² He has been vindicated from the charges brought against him at Lambeth and Oxford.³ We may observe, in further defence of him, that the Scholastic Philosophy which, as we have seen, aided in training his intellect, may, through its metaphysical jargon, have created an obscurity in the meaning of the documents presented at both those places. If we remember, also, that at the close of his life, when many of his friends had retracted, and he had no party in the country to support him; at a time, too, when the sword of persecution, suspended by a thread, was hanging over him, he came forward and opposed, with constantly-increasing energy, the Pope, and the hierarchy, and the clergy in arms;—we shall say that, so far from being charged with cowardice, he ought to be held up to admiration for that Christian heroism, springing from love to

¹ Walsingham, p. 338; "Chronicon Angliæ," p. 281; "Loca e Libro Veritatum," Gascoigne's, edited by J. T. Rogers, p. 141.

² Pages 197-200.

³ Pages 119-122, 219.

Christ, and an ardent desire for the salvation of souls, which led him to resolve to encounter misrepresentation, opposition, death itself, in the service of his Divine Master.

The qualities and qualifications just described are expressed in portraits of him which, in the main, agree.¹ He appears as a tall, thin figure, covered with a long black gown, surrounded by a girdle. The features are keen and sharply chiselled. The clear eye seems to look into the depths of the souls of those who are before him. The whole man wears an aspect of dignity and determination, and seems to be one born to command his fellow-creatures. Some people doubt, indeed, whether these are genuine portraits of the great spiritual hero whom we are anxious to have vividly before us. But there can be no doubt that we have the portraiture of his mind and character in his works. We may, by the careful examination of them, as far as they are at present before us, be led to emulate his example, to seek those graces and virtues for which he was conspicuous, and "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

We observe in his works an earnestness which comes up from the very ground of his heart, and an intellectual energy which carries him fearlessly onward

¹ The only known genuine portraits are one in the possession of Lord Denbigh; another at Mr. Turville's, of Husband's Bosworth Hall; another at Queen's College, Cambridge; another at the Rectory of Wycliffe, in Yorkshire; and another in the collection at Knowle.

in the investigation of truth. He seems, with one glance, to penetrate to the centre of long-established abuses, and speaks as if he thought that not to expose them would be an act of treason to the Almighty King of Heaven. We observe, also, in his sermons, expressions showing a deep sense of his responsibility as a Christian minister,—as, for instance, “No man should take prelacy or care of souls but in great dread”;¹ and indicating that he is looking forward to the time when he shall have to give an account of his ministry at the judgment-seat of Christ. All his actions and sayings bear the impress of truth and sincerity. So great was his joy when he had been emancipated from his bondage to some error, that in the midst of a learned discussion he would break forth into expressions like the following: “I thank God that I have been delivered from these subtleties.”² He earnestly asks God to preserve him from the sin of presumption in the treatment of doubtful questions, and implores His grace to enable him to persevere in a bold declaration of his belief in the great truths of the Gospel.³ He never conceals any change of opinion from his congregations, so that a careful examination of his sermons will disclose his progress throughout his memorable career. He shows that he loves not the praise of men when he tells us, on one occasion, that vindictiveness had

¹ “Select English Works,” Arnold, vol. i., p. 264.

² The “De Veritate Sacre Scripturæ,” quoted by Lechler, p. 319, n. 190.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 319, n. 192.

mingled with his righteous indignation, and that he will pray earnestly to God for grace to enable him to conquer this sin which did so easily beset him¹; or when he says, on another occasion, "I confess that in my own case I have often, from a motive of vain ambition, departed from the doctrine of Scripture both in my reasonings and replies, while my aim was to attain the show of fame among the people, and at the same time to strip off the pretensions of ambitious sophists."² A sadness constantly brooded over his spirit when he reflected on his terrible warfare with the powers of evil, against which he was obliged constantly to strive. Occasionally it affected his judgment, as, for instance, when, in answer to an argument for instrumental music that it prepares us for the worship and services of the heavenly sanctuary, he sorrowfully said that heaven is, indeed, the place of praise; but that "we are in perilous battle and in the valley of weeping."³ But then occasionally his sportive wit would shed a gleam of light over the dark clouds which had gathered around him.⁴

We see, then generally the character of this remarkable man. Our description of him would not be complete if we neglected to say that all his studies, all his intellectual achievements, were only considered

¹ See a passage from the "De Veritate," quoted by Shirley; "Fascic. Zizan.," p. xlv.

² Lechler, vol. ii., p. 312.

³ "Of Feigned Contemplative Life," Matthew, "S. E. W.," p. 192.

⁴ Lechler (vol. ii., p. 308-311) gives several instances of his wit and humour.

by him as important so far as they ministered to the promotion of the divine glory. He writes: "That fault which causes us to look to the leaves rather than to the fruit makes our services of no account in the sight of God."¹ In comparison of the object just stated, every pursuit, however, in the judgment of the world, important, or however exalted, appeared to sink into utter insignificance. He could give this solemn assurance: "Let God be my witness, that, before everything, I have God's glory in my eye, and the good of the Church, which springs out of reverence of Holy Scripture, and following the law of Christ."² Thus, then, as we shall see in the next two chapters, in which we shall consider the nature of his opinions and the success of his work, he laboured in the spirit of self-sacrifice, being fully assured that, though for a time it might be retarded, it would issue in the spiritual regeneration of his native country.

¹ "De Veritate Sacræ Scripturæ," c. 12.

² *Ibid.*, quoted by Lechler, p. 312.

CHAPTER VIII.

WICLIF'S OPINIONS.

A knowledge of the gradual formation of his opinions is indispensable to a just estimate of him.—His views on the following subjects:—Transubstantiation.—The Seven Sacraments.—Baptism.—Confirmation.—Penance and Absolution.—Confession.—Matrimony.—Celibacy of the clergy.—Ordination.—Extreme Unction.—The person and work of Christ.—Justification by faith.—Works before justification.—Pelagianism.—Man's moral inability to turn to God.—Invocation of saints.—Worship of the Virgin Mary.—Indulgences.—Works of Supererogation.—Image worship.—The sacrifice of the Mass.—Purgatory.—Predestination.—Episcopacy.—The Church.—Estimate of his position as a Reformer in doctrine.—His mode of opposing error.—Comparison between Wiclif as a Reformer and his predecessors, as well as his successors in the sixteenth century.—Grandeur of his position as a Reformer.—The debt of gratitude which we owe to him.—Burning of his bones, and reflections upon it.

WE must remember Wiclif's development, if we are to form a just estimate of him as a thinker and writer. But this is a matter to which, as Dr. Lechler shows, his biographers have not paid proper attention.¹ He refers especially to his earliest biographer, John Lewis. We may add to him Mr. Milner, the author of the "History of the Church." He accuses

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 1.

Wiclif of having kept his opinions in concealment, from fear of persecution, because he does not, as on other occasions, call the Pope the proud priest of Rome, or Antichrist, in the document presented to the Papal commissioners. I need not repeat the vindication of him from this charge. Mr. Milner does not seem to have been aware of his development, or of the dates of some of his works. The "Trialogus," the "Sentence of the Curse Expounded," and other works in which he made a fierce onslaught on the Papacy, were written during the last two or three years of his life; whereas Mr. Milner and others have supposed them to be written previously to his appearance at Lambeth. The fact was, that the Reformer did not express himself before 1378 as we know that he expressed himself after 1381, and that he had not, in the former year, arrived at that stage of development in which he could show, by his language, his great indignation against the Papacy.

Dr. Shirley and others have, by fixing the dates of his works, rendered a very great service to the memory of Wiclif. We are thus able, to some extent, to trace his progress. We can watch him as he bursts one fetter after another, and at length emerges from his dungeon into the land of life, and light, and liberty. An examination of his "Trialogus," the first of his works which was published, ought to have enabled us to discover his gradual emancipation. For he tells us that, on philosophical questions, "he had defended opinions the very reverse of those

which he afterwards maintained," and that "he was sunk in the depths of the sea, and had stammered out many things which he was unable to establish."¹ Dr. Lechler has shown us that he expresses himself still more strongly in his unprinted writings.² We have no doubt that his emancipation from the Papacy, by delivering him from control, gave him that freedom of action which enabled him to dig deep into the vast mine of Christian truth, and to bring up one gem of sound doctrine after another, which he exhibited to the world in all its beauty and brilliancy. But we have no doubt that an examination of the manuscripts of his works at Vienna, not yet published, many of which are as old as 1370, would enable us to discover the germ of many of the opinions which he afterwards maintained on the great truths of Christianity, and on the power and prerogatives of the Papacy. A comparison of these with the English works, which belong, almost without exception, to the last four years of his life, would enable us to see that he had observed that law of slow, orderly, and healthy progress which is one of the best tests of the reality of our Christianity. We should see that, just as the light of day slowly increases in brightness from the hour when a few streaks appear in the horizon, and tinge with a ruddy glow the summit of the eastern hills, to the time when the golden beams of day bathe, in a flood of glory, forest, and mountain, and river, so

¹ "Trialogus," lib. i., c. 10, p. 69, and lib. iii., c. 8, p. 155.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 2.

the light of divine truth, which had dawned on the darkness of his soul, shone more and more unto the perfect day. We shall now, we trust, be able to discover his gradual emancipation from his bondage to error, which we can trace without difficulty in the case of Luther, because he lived in the full blaze of day. We should, indeed, have been surprised if we had not been able to discover this progress. We should naturally suppose that a man of gigantic intellect, eager in the investigation of truth, anxious to devote all his powers to the promotion of the divine glory, would not occupy the same position as a teacher at the end of his life as at the beginning of his career. We should rather expect to see him toiling painfully up the steep ascent, animated with the firm determination to persevere till he had scaled those peaks which he saw only indistinctly through the mists which encompassed them at the commencement of his progress. I shall, therefore, now explain his principal theological opinions, tracing, as far as possible, the formation and growth of some of them.

The first subject which comes before us is the controversy as to Transubstantiation. We have already seen that Wiclif gave a proof of his sagacity by making this dogma the first object of his attack at Oxford, because it forms the keystone to the whole system of mediæval corruption. Dr. Lechler has shown from the "*De Civili Dominio*," which, he says, could not have been written later than 1378, that in that year he thought that the "priest makes the body

of Christ.”¹ Mr. Matthew, however, on the other hand, in his admirable preface to his edition of the *Select English Works*, has shown us that he uses language, as far back as 1367, in a sermon among the manuscripts at Lambeth, which we may regard as the beginning of his opposition to the dogma. He writes: “It seems enough for the Christian to believe that the body of Christ is, in some spiritual and sacramental manner, at every point of the consecrated host; and that, next after God, honour is to be chiefly rendered to that body; and, in the third place, to that sensible Sacrament, as to an image or tomb of Christ.”² This language is, as Mr. Matthew observes, not incompatible with a belief in the dogma, but it shows “a disposition to dwell upon the spiritual side in preference to the logical or dogmatic account of the Sacrament.” We can trace imperfectly subsequent stages of his advance. One of his views was, that it is not in accordance with God’s nature to annihilate anything. But he saw that annihilation was daily taking place in the Sacrament of the altar, because the substance of the bread ceased to be at consecration, and that it was heresy to deny the change. He at first satisfied himself with the explanation that the substance of the bread was not annihilated, as its accidents—whiteness, roundness, and length—remained. At length he saw that this explanation was not satisfactory, and was thus led, according to his adversary Wodeford, to deny Tran-

¹ Lechler’s “*Life*,” vol. ii., p. 174.

² Matthew, Preface, p. xxii.

substantiation.¹ He confesses, too, in a controversial piece which belongs to the year 1381, that he had for a long time suffered himself to be deceived by the doctrine of "accident without substance."²

But though we can only trace very indistinctly before, and especially after, 1378, the steps which led to this change, we can have no doubt that in and after the year 1381 he opposed the dogma as strongly as Dr. Lechler says that he formerly supported it. He deals with the subject in every possible way, addressing to the learned, and especially to the friars, in the "Trialogus," the arguments which he had already given, in a popular form, in nervous English, to the people in the "Wicket." He gives, in the following passages in the "Trialogus," his reasons for assigning this prominence to his attacks on the dogma. "Of all the heresies," he writes, "which have ever sprung up in the Church, there was never one which was more cunningly brought in by hypocrites, or which cheats the people in more ways than this; for it robs the people, it makes them commit idolatry, it denies the faith of Scripture, and consequently, by unbelief, provokes the Truth in many ways to anger."³ And again he shows that this dogma is the keystone to the whole fabric of imposture. "It is," he says, "as if the Devil had been scheming to this effect, saying,

¹ Matthew, Preface, pp. xxiii., xxiv. See also "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. xxvii., lvii.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 174.

³ "Trial.," iv., 2; p. 248.

'If I can, by my vicar, Antichrist, so far seduce believers as to lead them to deny that this Sacrament is bread, and to believe in it as a contemptible quality, I may, in the same manner, lead them to believe afterwards whatever I may wish, since the opposite is taught by Scripture and by the very senses of mankind.'"¹ We see that one of his reasons is the robbery practised on the people by means of the masses. But his indignation was chiefly excited by the idolatry which springs from it. The conviction that this is the case causes him to represent throughout his "Wicket" the consecrated host as "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet which should afterwards stand in the holy place; and which leads him to exclaim, in a transport of holy zeal, "Where find ye that ever Christ, or any of His disciples or apostles, taught any man to worship it?"² He also endeavours to bring down the priests from the fancied pre-eminence which this power confers upon them: "And thou, then," he writes, "that art an earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker? by what reason, say ye, that be sinners, that ye make God?"³

The doctrine of the Schoolmen was, that the Sacrament was an accident without the substance; or that the whiteness or roundness might remain after the bread had ceased to exist. He opposes this dogma

¹ "Trialogus," iv., 8, 268.

² "Wicket," ed. Oxford, 1828, p. vi.

³ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

first of all with weapons drawn from the armoury of Scripture. "Christ, who cannot lie, said that the bread which He took into His hands was really His body."¹ Again, "St. Paul would have been guilty of gross negligence towards the Church, the bride of Christ, if, knowing that this Sacrament is not bread, but an accident without a subject, he had so frequently called it bread, and never by its true name, when he knew prophetically that so many heresies on this subject would arise in future times."² Again, in a very happy manner, he illustrates the subject by a reference to the co-existence of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. In the profession of faith concerning the Eucharist, already referred to, written, as Mr. Arnold supposes, between June, 1382, and his death in December, 1384, he writes: "Right so, as the person of Christ is very God and man—very Godhead and very manhood—right so, the same Sacrament is very God's body and very bread."³ He then produces seven witnesses, Ignatius, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, the Roman Church itself in a Decretal under Nicholas II., and the Canon of the Mass to show that the doctrine was unknown in former ages,⁴ adding, in another place, that it was altogether unknown till "the time of the loosing of Satan," *i.e.*, from the year 1,000, thus showing that he considered that the prediction of St.

¹ "Trialogus," iv., 2, 250.

² *Ibid.*, iv., 4, 257.

³ "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 502.

⁴ "Fascic. Zizan.," pp. 126-128.

John, in Revelation xx. 7, had been at that time fulfilled, and besides that this dogma was the cause of the gross corruption which, since the year 1,000, had pervaded the Church.¹ He employs the following illustration to make his meaning intelligible: "Do we believe that John the Baptist, when made, by the word of Christ, to be Elias, ceased to be John, or ceased to be anything that he was in substance before? In the same manner the bread, while becoming, through the virtue of Christ's words, the body of Christ, does not cease to be bread, for, when it has come to be *sacramentally* the body of Christ, it is still bread substantially."² He employs against the Schoolmen the weapons of ridicule and sarcasm: "Mice know that the substance of bread is retained. But then unbelievers have not even such knowledge. They never know what bread or what wine has been consecrated except they see it consecrated."³

We see, then, that Wiclif asserted that there are true bread and wine, but, at the same time, the body and blood of Christ, in the Sacrament. The question then arises as to the mode of the presence. He plainly rejects the idea that the bread is only in a figure the body of Christ, for he writes: "Just as it is admitted, on Scripture grounds, that this Sacrament is the body of Christ, and not merely a sacramental figure of His body, so it must be fully conceded, upon the same authority, that the bread which is this Sacrament, is, in very truth, the body of Christ."⁴

¹ "Trialogus," iv., 2, 249.

² *Ibid.*, iv., 4, 256.

³ *Ibid.*, iv., 5, 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv., 4, 255.

But the body is not present in a corporeal manner; "for we must not suppose that the body of Christ descends out of heaven to that host which is consecrated anywhere in a church; but it remains above in heaven, fixed and immovable. Only in a spiritual manner is it present in the host, and it has not dimensions and other accidents which are only to be found in heaven."¹ "We see not that presence," as Dr. Lechler writes, quoting from the "De Eucharistia," "with the bodily eye, but with the spiritual eye, *i.e.*, with the eye of faith."² Wiclif also tells us that "only to worthy communicants is the Sacrament a blessing."³ In a sermon among the Vienna Manuscripts, he says, "that those who are not elect do not partake of Christ's body and blood; that they partake of it as little as the man who has partaken of indigestible food can be said to have really consumed it."⁴ Thus, then, we find that Wiclif is on this point in exact accord with the Church of England; for we are told in the Church Catechism that "the inward part or thing signified is the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper"; and in the twenty-eighth Article, "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is Faith."

¹ "Trialogus," iv., 8, 272.

² Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 190.

³ "De Veritate Sacræ Scripturæ," c. 12.

⁴ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 206.

And again in the twenty-ninth Article, "The wicked . . . to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing." He holds also with the Church of England in her twenty-sixth Article, that the unworthiness of the ministers hinders not the effect of the Sacrament, for he writes, "Anti-christ's sophisters should know well that a cursed man doeth fully the Sacraments, though it be to his damnation."¹ The Lutheran Church, evidently taking as its guide the decree of the Council of Constance, incorrectly attributes to him the contrary opinion.

We see, then, that Wiclif in this matter occupies a more Scriptural position than Luther, for the latter held, not only that the body of Christ is present throughout the world, but that the worthy and the unworthy alike partake of it,—the first to their salvation, the second to their condemnation. We cannot fail to be impressed with a strong sense of admiration when we see the conscientiousness with which he devoted himself to the study,—when we find him, during the last four years of his life, applying the whole force of his mind to the solution of an important problem, and persevering till he had obtained a firm hold upon the truth. He set the example of appealing to Holy Scripture as the one test of truth and the infallible arbiter of controversies. He knew, indeed, that he should have to contend almost single-handed with the legions of his foes. When he was harassed by

¹ "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 227.

that opposition, when he was suffering from "that weariness of the flesh" which springs from excessive study, he used those touching words: "I trust, in the mercy of God, that, after this short and miserable life, I shall be abundantly rewarded by the Lord for this just controversy.¹ He was full of melancholy forebodings when he looked forward to the immediate result of his labours. "I am certain," he said, that "the publication of the truth in our streets may for a time be a little prevented by the threats of Antichrist"; but then he could add immediately, in the full confidence of faith, casting a prophetic glance towards future times, "I know that it can never be destroyed, for the truth itself declares, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.'"²

With regard to the "Seven" Sacraments, Wiclif holds that the number is too large if tried by the Scriptural standard. He had not, however, altogether escaped from his bondage to the Romish system, for he still speaks of the number "Seven"; but he places the Lord's Supper and Baptism in the front rank, and hints that the others are no more Sacraments than the ordinance of preaching.³ He says that, "without doubt, infants who have rightly received water baptism are partakers of baptismal grace, and are baptised with the Holy Ghost."⁴ He is here generally in agreement with the twenty-seventh Article and the answer in the Church Catechism relating

¹ "Trialogus," iv., 6, 262.

² *Ibid.*, iv., 4, 258.

³ *Ibid.*, iv., pp. 281-333.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv., 12, 286.

to the same subject. It must be admitted, however, that his strong feeling against the bishops of the day, and the frivolous vanities with which Confirmation was loaded, led him to speak in a disparaging tone of it, to assert that the Holy Ghost is not given by all bishops in this apostolical ordinance, and that its importance has been much exaggerated to the depreciation of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.¹ With regard to Penance and Absolution, he holds the view of the Church of England, that the office of the priest is declaratory, asserting that "priests are vicars or messengers to witness to the people that God assoileth for contrition," and that, "in shrift, though we tell our sins to a priest, and he put us on penance, we are assoiled never the rather, unless God, who is the Priest of souls, see that we sorrow with all our hearts for our sins, and that we be in full purpose and will to leave them for ever after."² He holds that "confession made to true priests, and learned in God's law, does much good to sinful men, so that contrition for sins before done, come therewith, and good life, and keeping of God's law, and works of mercy to poor men follow after."³ His opinion however, is, that if this "Sacrament is needful to sinful men, it is not so needful as is confession made to God, for that is ever needful, if God

¹ "Sentence of Curse," c., vi., "S. E. W.," iii., 285; "Trialogus," iv., 15, 294.

² Lewis, p. 168.

³ "Sentence of Curse," &c., "S. E. W.," iii., 284.

shall pardon men.”¹ And again, “We should believe that the grace of God is so great and plenteous, that if a man sin never so much nor so long in his life, if he will ask of God mercy, and be contrite for his sin, God will forgive him, without such devices feigned of priests.”² With regard to matrimony he expresses the unnatural and unscriptural opinion that marriages within the closest degrees of relationship are condemned only by human maxims and institutions.³ These words must, however, have been written in haste, as this is the only passage in which the opinion is found. He condemns, in the strongest terms the compulsory celibacy of the clergy, asserting that it is unscriptural and morally pernicious.⁴ He held that Ordination is a sacramental ordinance, but doubts whether it impresses an indelible character,⁵ praying that God would be pleased to confer on the clergy some further grace; and that extreme unction has too weak a foundation in that passage of Scripture (James v. 14) on which it is commonly rested.⁶

The prayerful study of Holy Scripture led him also to the discovery of other fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith. He delights especially to bring forward Christ as our Mediator, our Leader, our Divine and Adorable Redeemer. This was the distinguishing principle of his theology, and it con-

¹ “On the Schism of the Popes,” c. v., Arnold, “S. E. W.,” vol. iii., p. 256.

² “Of Confession,” Matthew, “S. E. W.,” p. 339.

³ “Trialogus,” iv., 20, 317. ⁴ Matthew, “S. E. W.,” p. 170.

⁵ “Trialogus,” iv., 15, 296. ⁶ *Ibid.*, iv., 26, 334.

nected him especially with the Reformers in the sixteenth century. He calls Christ "The Prior of our Order," or "The Common Abbot," "The Highest Abbot of our Order."¹ This is the great truth asserted in the eighteenth Article of our Church, "Of obtaining eternal salvation only by the name of Christ." We are not, therefore, surprised to find him declaring, "I do not believe that even the smallest sin committed against the Lord can be blotted out by any merit, unless it were done away in the main or principally by the merit of this man (the Redeemer)."² And, again, we find him saying in the "De Veritate Sacræ Scripturæ" and his "Exposition of the Decalogue:" "We are justified by His justice, and made righteous by a participation in His righteousness."³ And, again, "How, I ask, can any man deserve happiness by living and acting according to the will of God, unless God of His great mercy should accept the service?"⁴ He seems here in agreement with our eleventh Article, "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings." Again, his doctrine is in exact accordance with that contained in our thirteenth Article: "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of the Spirit are

¹ Lechler's "Life," vol. ii., p. 70.

² *Ibid.*, ii., p. 87.

³ James's "Apology for Wiclif," c. v.

⁴ "Trialogus," iii., 2, 132.

not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace of congruity," *i.e.* they do not render it meet and equitable that God should confer on us saving grace ; for he says, "It is altogether a vain imagination that man can by his moral behaviour induce God to give him the grace of the Holy Spirit needful for conversion."¹ His views on this subject agree with those of Bradwardine, from whom he may have learnt them.² We think, therefore, that Melancthon was altogether incorrect in his assertion that Wiclif knew nothing of the doctrine of justification by faith, and that he often stated that our good works were the meritorious cause of our pardon and acceptance. Equally unfounded is the charge of Pelagianism which has been brought against him ; for he writes, "We are all sinners in our mother's womb ;"³ "All men are originally sinners as Adam and in Adam ;" the doctrine asserted in the ninth Article of our Church. He agrees also with the tenth Article that "man cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling on God" ; for he writes, "that we cannot think a good thought unless Jesus the angel of great counsel send it, or perform a good work, unless it be properly His good work ;"⁴ "It is impossible that

¹ "Trialogus," iii., 7, 153.

² Page 27.

³ James's "Apology," c. v., quoted from the "Exposition of the Decalogue" and "De Veritate."

⁴ James's "Apology," c. vi. He quotes from the "Commentary on the Psalms."

these four virtues, or any moral virtue, can be found in man without the assistance of God's grace."¹

We might naturally suppose that, when Wiclif brings forward prominently the pre-eminent dignity of our Divine Redeemer, he would be opposed to the Invocation of saints, and to pilgrimages, the veneration of relics, and other superstitious observances which follow in its train. We shall accordingly find that he gradually cast off these superstitions, and acknowledged the One Mediator through whom alone we have access to the Father. We can trace the development of his views on this doctrine better than on any other doctrine which has come before us. Whereas in former years, he said, "there is no sex or age, no rank or position, of any one in the whole human race which has no need to call for the help of the Holy Virgin,"² in a later year, in a tract on the Ave Maria, he says nothing about invoking the help of the Virgin, but only speaks of the imitation of her example,³ and recommends, in the last year of his life, that the festivals of the saints should be discontinued and only the festival of Christ observed. He expresses also an opinion that a devotion or a festival offered to any saint is only of value in so far as it is fitted to heighten the feeling of pious devotion towards the Saviour Himself, and that the consequence of the multiplication of the festivals of the saints is that the attention of the soul is withdrawn from the

¹ "Trialogus," iii., 2, 132.

² Lechler, vol. ii., p. 114.

³ "Select English Works," Matthew, p. 203.

One Mediator.¹ Whereas, in the "De Dominio Civili," written not later than 1378, he maintains only the possibility that the Church may deceive herself and others in the canonisation of saints ;² in the "Trialogus," written in 1383, he puts into the mouths of others the assertion that "the Curia is guilty of a blasphemous presumption, when, without a special revelation, it so plainly takes no account of the holiness of the departed, about which it knows as little as the priest John in Asia or as the Sultan."³ He seems to be emancipated from this error, when he expresses an opinion that God and the Church triumphant regard the worshipping of corporeal relics with no approbation ; that the ornaments so foolishly lavished on the graves of the saints should be divided among the poor ; and that it would be better for Christian people to remain at home than to make pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints.⁴

Wiclif anticipated Luther in his opposition to Indulgences. He attacks them with the same vehemence in one of his English tracts.⁵ He proclaims aloud that "prelates foully deceive Christian men by feigned indulgences, and rob them cursedly of their money ; and that they are a subtle merchandise of Antichrist's clerks, to magnify their feigned power and to get worldly goods, and to cause men not to dread sin, but to wallow therein like hogs." With regard to the pretext that the payment was for the seal, he

¹ "Trialogus," iii., 30, 235.

² Lechler, ii., p. 114.

³ "Trialogus," iii., 30, 237.

⁴ Lechler, pp. 117, 118.

⁵ "Of Prelates," Matthew, pp. 80-82.

exclaims sarcastically, "Certes, a little dead lead costs many thousand pounds a year to our poor land!" and he adds, that the deception is the same "as if they sold a fatted goose for little or nothing, while the garlic costs many shillings." He scorned, as a fiction, the doctrine of saints' merits laid up with the Pope, condemned in our fourteenth Article, "Of Works of Supererogation;" for he writes: "This feigned fancy of spiritual treasure in heaven, of which each Pope is made dispenser at his own will, is a lying word, dreamed without ground."¹ He says in another place, "As to the holy merits of saints, that they did more than was needful for their own bliss, Christ never taught this in all His Gospel, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor any other Apostle."² With regard to image-worship, he condemned the waste of money in decorating "dead stocks";³ but thought that images might be useful as the wedding-ring which the wife keeps as a symbol of her love to her husband.⁴ They might be used "to wake up the mind and heart of a man to attend to heavenly things; but, when this effect has been produced, the sooner the imagination of the man drops all attention to the qualities of the image so much the better, for in the continued dwelling of the imagination on these

¹ "De Pontificum Romanorum Schismate," "Select English Works," Arnold, vol. iii., p. 262.

² "Of Prelates," Matthew, p. 81.

³ "How Satan and his Children," &c., *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴ Lewis, p. 175.

qualities lies the venom of idolatry.”¹ He, in some sense, retained the doctrine of Purgatory. In a treatise, “The Sentence of the Curse Expounded,” written only a year before his death, he allows that “saying of mass, with cleanness of holy life and burning devotion, is most pleasing to God Almighty, and profitable to Christian souls in Purgatory.”² While, however, it thus appears that he does not join Luther in his strong opposition to the sacrifice of the Mass, and thinks that foundations may be of some use to the departed, he affirms that the most trifling good work, done by the man during his lifetime, was of far more use to him than the spending of thousands of pounds after his death for the repose of his soul. The sacrifice is not one of atonement, but of thanksgiving.³ In a work written in the early part of 1381, he divides the Church into three portions: the militant in the world; the Church of the faithful dead who are waiting in purgatory for the consummation of their happiness; and the Church of the blessed saints in the heavenly mansions. With regard to the souls in Purgatory, he writes, “Since the souls to be saved are to be purified from many earthly affections, it is evident that they now rest in a place which God has chosen, before they attain the blessedness of heaven. It seems probable to many that they will not attain the completion of their happiness till the day of judgment; but, since they are

¹ “*Liber Mandatorum*,” quoted by Lechler, vol. ii., p. 112.

² “*Select English Works*,” Arnold, vol. iii., p. 288.

³ Vienna MS., quoted by Lechler, ii., 118, 123, 184, 202.

secure of their happiness, they are happier after death than they were during their pilgrimage.”¹ We must see that his doctrine on this subject is unsatisfactory. With reference, however, to it, we may observe, in the words of Dr. James, the first Librarian of the Bodleian at Oxford, in his “Apology of Wiclif,” published in 1608, “it thrusts the Popish Purgatory clean out of doors; for there is little rest and less sleeping there if we believe them who have come from thence: and by this reason, if the fire of Purgatory be clean put out, the smoke of it—that is, prayers for the dead—must needs, in a very short time, vanish away.”²

We see, then, that Wiclif is opposed to all the Romish doctrines condemned in the twenty-second Article of the Church of England, with the single exception of Purgatory, on which he speaks with a very hesitating utterance. We must glance at his views respecting Episcopacy and the Church. With regard to Episcopacy, it is evident that his opinions were in a fluctuating state. Some have argued from his assertion that two orders were sufficient in the primitive church,—priests and deacons,—and that by the institution of Christ priests and bishops were all one, that he was decidedly opposed to Episcopacy.³ But this is unquestionably a hasty conclusion; for we find that he writes in the “Polemical Works,” “I

¹ “Polemical Works,” pp. 147, 148.

² James’s “Apology,” c. viii., 24, 25.

³ “Trialogus,” lib. iv., c. 15; “On the Seven Deadly Sins,” c. 9; Arnold, “S. E. W.,” vol. iii., p. 131.

grant, however, that it is God's will that there should be gradations among the clergy, because it is His will that one priest should be superior, and bishop over a number of others ; but it is not His will that this should be a superiority of worldly grandeur or riches, but that its superiority should consist in its being a humble grade of ministerial service according to the law of Christ."¹ His mind was evidently at times thrown off its balance by the sight of the vice and worldliness of many of the bishops around him, and their total neglect of their sacred duties. With regard to the Church, he held that only the elect, those who are "predestinated to obtain divine acceptance, and to become holy," form the true body of Christ. But, though we find him asserting, in his "Trialogus," his abstruse scholastic lucubration, very rigorously, this grace of predestination, "which," he says, "can by no means fail," we discover scarcely any reference to it in his practical discourses. He also speaks of Holy Church as a congregation of just men for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood."² Speaking of worldly bishops, he says:—"That they are, indisputably, no members of the Holy Church, but members of Satan, disciples of Antichrist."³ But it is evident that he wavered in his views on the subject ; for he speaks of the "mixed Church, which comprehends men chosen to bliss, and hypocrites that should

¹ "Polemical Works," p. 101.

² "Great Sentence of Curse," &c., "S. E. W.," iii., 273.

³ "Saints' Days Sermons at Vienna," in Lechler, ii., 104.
See also "Trialogus," iv., 32, 325.

be damned."¹ It is evident that, holding this view, he must strongly condemn that very prevalent error in his day, involving serious consequences, against which Luther also entered his protest, that the clergy constitute the Church.² In fact, he has often reminded us of a truth which many, in these days of brighter light, have failed to discover, that the "visible Church of Christ," "the congregation of faithful men," referred to in our nineteenth Article, which, we see, expresses Wiclif's opinion, consists of clergy and laity, possessing the same privileges and invested with the same responsibilities, who should form a holy brotherhood, associated for the purpose of causing the moral wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose, of demolishing the strongholds of sin and Satan, and of putting to flight "the armies of the aliens."

We have now followed Wiclif through the successive stages of his career. The last six years of his life will be for ever memorable, because they witnessed the gradual adoption of all the opinions just described, which directly connect him with the doctrinal reformation of the Church in the sixteenth century. Even with our present materials the main points of his teaching are, as we have seen, perfectly intelligible. We cannot, however, settle many details until more of his Latin works are published. We see, then, that Luther was altogether

Lewis, p. 152.

² See especially his tract, "Eight Sources of Deception for simple Christians."—Arnold, "S. E. W.," iii., 447.

incorrect when he asserted that Wiclif attacked, not the doctrine, but the life of the Church; and that Dean Milman has not correctly stated that Wiclif did not construct for the Church a system of doctrine.¹ Some have supposed that he borrowed his religious principles from the Waldenses, who have retained the truth in its purity in the valleys of Piedmont from the days of primitive Christianity. But we cannot discover in his writings any proof of the truth of that assertion. We believe that he owed them to the prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures, and of the writings of the best of the early Fathers of the Church, especially St. Augustine.

Enough has now been said to enable us to form a just estimate of his position as a Reformer. We have seen that he had not altogether disentangled himself from the superstitious doctrines of Romanism. The wonder is, when we consider the short time during which he had been really engaged in the work, that he should have made so much progress in the investigation of truth. But surely all members of the Church of England ought to venerate him, because he held nearly all the doctrines embodied in those Articles and formularies of our Church which are hallowed by a thousand sacred associations.

We trust that he has been sufficiently vindicated from the charge of propagating revolutionary principles, to which, we are sorry to say, Dean Hook has

¹ "Latin Christianity," vol. viii., p. 202; "Wiclif's Place in History," by Professor Burrows, pp. 37, 38.

to some extent, given his sanction.¹ We have fully examined his views as to endowments, and have shown that it is wrong to judge a man of the fourteenth by the standard of the nineteenth century.² The charge of coarse invective has also been brought against him. But in this respect he was not nearly so bad as his opponents. We find that railing and vituperation were prevailing characteristics of the fourteenth century and of the times which followed the Reformation. "Paradoxical as it may seem," writes Mr. Matthew, in his admirable preface to "Select English Works," "I venture to say that one of Wiclif's most marked characteristics is his essential moderation."³ It is true, indeed, that he often applies abusive epithets to his opponents. But surely there was enough in the conduct of such men as Bishop Spencer, of Norwich, to excite his vehement indignation. If, however, we look carefully into the matter, we shall find that there is no fanaticism, no wildness in his statements. We shall see that he establishes his conclusions by a calm and logical process of reasoning. We have seen that he not only, as we must admit, assails the Papacy with unmitigated violence, but that he shows in a quiet manner, by convincing arguments, that the Pope is the Antichrist, the man of sin, who sits "as God in the temple of God."⁴

¹ Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops," vol. iii., p. 84, and vol. iv., p. 344. Pages 73-76.

² Pages 123-129.

³ "Select English Works," p. xl.

⁴ Pages 182, 183.

Let us hear what he says of himself, and we shall perceive that he was no rash speaker, that his heart was in the right place, and that he endeavoured carefully to consider every subject which came before him: "Lest this controversy should be too barren, I have set firmly before myself, as a threefold rule of life, from Scripture, first, to keep myself clear from sin in this matter, by taking diligent care in the matter of the fault with which I am charged, that I too often mingle an unfair zeal for punishment with whatever good intention I have. . . . Hence I will strive more carefully, wearying my God with prayers concerning spiritual faults. . . . Secondly, though I am not conscious of the fault openly charged against me, I will patiently suffer insult. Thirdly, when I defend myself from false accusations, I will pray for those who falsely accuse me, lest any malice or zeal for punishment should add a pain to those wounds which I have already received."¹

We see, then, the secret of Wiclif's success as a Reformer in doctrine. He earnestly prayed that God would give him the mastery over a temper which, if uncontrolled, would cloud his judgment, and prevent him from applying the whole force of his mind to the investigation of truth. Surely a man who could offer that prayer, who could exert that effort to conquer himself, who could thus elaborate such a system of doctrine, does not deserve the charge brought against him by Dean Hook, that "he was

¹ "Fascic. Zizan.," xlv., quoted by Dr. Shirley from the "De Veritate Sacræ Scripturæ."

utterly void of judgment.”¹ Wiclif, in regard to originality, occupied an undoubted pre-eminence above the Reformers of the sixteenth century. I have just referred to the Waldenses, a foreign Church; but I may state also that he found no assistance in a doctrinal Reformation from members of the Roman Catholic Church, with the exception of Bradwardine. The study of the works of that holy man, whose case shows that the plant of Scriptural religion may grow up even in the tainted atmosphere of Romanism, had led him, as we have seen, to oppose the meritoriousness of good works, and to accept the doctrine of Predestination.² Bernard of Clairvaux, Arnold of Brescia, William of Ockham, Richard Fitz Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh, had indeed lifted up their voices either against the Mendicant brothers, or one or more of the following abuses and corruptions: the temporal power of the Popes, the simony, the usury, the venality, the worldliness, the vices and crimes of the Church and Court of Rome. But they did not openly assail the doctrinal system of the Papacy. Our own illustrious Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 to 1253, opposed all the evils connected with the ecclesiastical system, as well as the Mendicant brothers; for, though at first he made use of them to supply the scandalous deficiencies of the parochial clergy, yet he afterwards opposed them as strongly as he once supported them, calling them in one of his works, as Wiclif informs us more than

¹ “Lives of the Archbishops,” vol. iii., p. 87.

² Page 27.

once, "a dead body, which has emerged from the sepulchre, wrapped in funeral clothes, and driven by the Devil among men."¹

We cannot fail to admire Grosseteste when we see him standing up boldly before the Pope at Lyons, and charging the Court of Rome with having, by its "provisions and collations, appointed to the pastoral care not pastors, but destroyers of men," or when, in his celebrated letter to Innocent IV., in which he refuses to collate the Pope's nephew, Frederick de Lavagna, to a Canonry in the Cathedral of Lincoln, referring to the evil of non-residence, he writes: "The non-administration of pastoral offices is, by the testimony of Scripture, the slaying and destruction of the sheep; and those who introduce into the Church of God such slayers of the divine image and handiwork in the sheep of Christ are worse than the mur-

¹ This was one of Wiclif's favourite quotations. We do not know from which of Grosseteste's works it is taken. We find it in the "Polemical Tracts against the Sects," p. 15, and in Arnold, "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 60. He wrote an English tract on these words against the Friars, because by their means his poor priests were imprisoned in 1382.—Arnold, "Select English Works," vol. iii., p. 230. He also makes observations on these words with reference to them in the "Trialogus," iv., 26, 336, and in "Supp. Trial.," 434. See also note to "Polemical Tracts," p. 15. The idea is that their souls are dead, that they have come forth from their sepulchre, their cloisters, wrapped in the funeral robes of hypocrisy, and that they are driven by the Devil among men to work mischief. Dante has a similar idea ("Inferno," c. xxxiii., 122-147). The soul of the Friar Alberigo, possessed by the Devil, is below, while the body is in the upper regions.

derers themselves, and are nearer to Lucifer and Antichrist."¹ But he merely denounced the individual Pope. He had that intense reverence for the Papal office which prevailed during the thirteenth century. He did not impugn any of the doctrines of Romanism. But still all right-minded men will hold this illustrious Bishop in great veneration, because he had the courage to brave the wrath of the most powerful Pope who ever wore the tiara ; because he was a man of high integrity, of approved faithfulness, of energetic will, and of glowing zeal for God's glory ; and because he was anxious to save not only his own soul, but the souls of those committed to him by virtue of his office as a Bishop, whom he saw perishing in their iniquity. When we see that he showed his great reverence for Scripture, which he describes as "the star guiding the vessel of the Church to the haven of salvation ;"² and when we reflect that he finds the highest wisdom to stand in this,—“to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified,”³—we may well believe that the seeds of Protestantism were planted in his breast, that he was a harbinger of the Reformation, a venerable witness for God's truth in the midst of an evil generation. In all probability, if his life had been prolonged, he might, like Wiclif, have assailed the Papal office itself, and might have repudiated the whole doctrinal system of the Papacy.

We see, then, that Wiclif did not derive from Grosseteste his knowledge of the doctrines enume-

¹ Canon Perry's "Life of Grosseteste," pp. 213, 268.

² "Epistolæ," 115, p. 336.

³ *Ibid.*, 269, p. 85.

rated in this chapter. This noble-minded bishop had, however, laid, in the manner just described, a deep foundation for his work. Wiclif had evidently a great veneration for him. He often quotes him, as an authority, not only in matters of theology, but also in scholastic philosophy, metaphysics, and astronomy.¹ He showed his admiration of his saintly qualities by giving him, without canonisation—which was often refused—the title of a saint, conferred upon him by enthusiastic admirers among his fellow-countrymen from the time of his death till the sixteenth century.² Wiclif showed in this manner that he wished to catch the reflection of the brightness of his character, and to shine with a pure and holy radiance like its own. When we have before us the “*De Civili Dominio*,” among the Vienna Manuscripts—which has never been printed—we shall see that he especially calls him a saint in a part of the work where he has given the Bishop’s letter refusing to collate Frederick de Lavagna to the Canonry, with a commentary upon it, justifying its contents, thus showing that, like the rest of his fellow-countrymen through the ages, he admired him chiefly on account of the heroism which he displayed in braving the anger of a powerful Pope, when he resisted his arbitrary mandate.³ Grosseteste’s example thus aided him in his work. He made success-

¹ “*Dialogus*,” pp. 68, 84, 97, 113, 125, 166, 265.

² Lechler, vol. i., p. 53.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 111. He quotes from the Vienna Manuscript.

ful resistance less difficult hereafter. Wiclif, by quoting and commenting on that letter, showed that he was fired with the holy ambition of imitating that zeal for which the Bishop was pre-eminently distinguished. He undoubtedly, however, occupied a grander position than Grosseteste, or any of his predecessors, because he not only assailed every one of the abuses and corruptions already mentioned, but also, with the sacred Scriptures in his hands, pushed his inquiries into every part of her doctrinal system, and showed that she had corrupted and mutilated "the faith once delivered unto the saints."

Wiclif laboured under greater disadvantages than Luther. He and his followers, as I have already stated,¹ had been aided in their work by the revival of learning, by Tauler and his followers through the preceding century, by Erasmus, by John Weissel and others, all of whom had attacked the doctrinal system of the Papacy, and even by Wiclif himself; for, as we shall see in the next chapter, if Wiclif had not preceded him, he would not have accomplished so quickly that doctrinal reformation for which he has a lasting claim on our gratitude.

Wiclif was in this respect superior to Luther, that the latter seems to have been, during the last part of his life, retrogressive in doctrine, whereas Wiclif was constantly advancing, and, if his Reformation work had extended over as long a period as that of Luther, would, it may fairly be thought, have ceased to hold every one of the dogmas of

¹ Pages 198, 199.

Romanism. Wiclif may not have brought forward so prominently as Luther the great doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ,—which we think that there can be no doubt that he made the foundation of his hopes of salvation,—but, on the other hand, Luther held the doctrine of Consubstantiation—differing little from Transubstantiation—the key, in Wiclif's opinion, of the Roman position, which he assailed with all the fiery energy of his nature. Wiclif also showed that he was before his age by assailing the corruption of the Roman Court, Indulgences, pilgrimages, and prayers to saints, which the Reformers in the sixteenth century made the first objects of their attack. If, while surpassing all in his own and in the following century in the vehemence and the wide range of his attack as a controversialist, he was not equal to Luther in the burning indignation which he expressed on account of the pollution of the sanctuary, it was because he had not witnessed the abortive attempts of the Councils to heal the sores of the ecclesiastical body, or witnessed the enormous vices and crimes which have consigned to eternal infamy many of the Popes of the fifteenth century.

We thus see the relative position which these two distinguished men occupied as Reformers. They were both raised up for the regeneration of the Church. Hereafter those words will be true in regard to them,—“He that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.” We may admit that we cannot defend Wiclif's opinions on every point, and must make

allowance for the exasperation produced by the iniquity which he saw on all sides of him. Again we say that we must remember that he lived in the fourteenth, and not in the nineteenth century, when the Church is fully awake to its duties and responsibilities, and when every effort is exerted for the regeneration of society. Herculean strength was required to loosen the stones of that fabric of corruption and superstition, which at the time seemed built on a foundation firmer than that of the heavens and the earth. We owe a debt of gratitude to Wiclif because his mighty energies were employed for the accomplishment of that object, and because he thus prepared the way for that noble army of Reformers who shook to its foundation the usurped dominion of Romanism.

The Church of Rome, at the time of the Council of Constance, was fully aware that Wiclif had inflicted a great injury upon it. His treatises had been, as we shall see, carried to Bohemia, and were eagerly read by all classes of the community. If he had been alive, the statute "*de Hæretico Comburendo*" would have enabled her at once to inflict summary vengeance upon him. As he was now beyond her grasp, she determined to wreak her impotent fury upon his bones. Accordingly, in 1415 a decree was passed, branding a long list of his opinions with the mark of heresy, and directing that "his body and bones, if they might be discerned and known from the bodies of other faithful people, should be taken from the ground and thrown away from the burial of the

Church, according to the canon laws and decrees." This decree was not executed till 1428, forty-four years after his death. As we stand in Lutterworth Church, we wander back in imagination to that distant age. Around that grave, in the chancel, we see Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Fleming, of Lincoln, once a devoted follower of Wiclif, and other dignitaries and clergy, anxious to display their enmity to one who had denounced the corruptions of their Church, and had warned the nations to escape from their spiritual bondage. The Church is crowded with the officials and the townspeople, who are attracted by the novelty of the spectacle. The sound of the pick-axe falls on the ear. Slowly rising through the opening thus made is seen the coffin of the great heretic. Placed on the shoulders of men, it is carried through that door in the chancel still standing, down that winding road to the river Swift, which glides along tranquilly at the foot of the hill. A fire is kindled on the bridge; the bones of Wiclif are taken out of the coffin, and are flung into it. They were thus slowly reduced to ashes, which were afterwards cast into the river. Many in that crowd would doubtless behold with tears the indignities there offered to the remains of one to whom they had listened spell-bound as he spoke to them of the love of the Saviour, or warned them to prepare for death, judgment, and eternity; of one who had often visited them in their homes, and spoken to them in the time of sickness and sorrow, pouring the oil and wine of heavenly consolation into the wounded.

spirit. But they would have been sustained and comforted if they could have looked forward, and realised the idea which the scattering of those ashes on the river suggested to old Fuller : "The brook did convey his ashes into Avon ; Avon into Severn ; Severn into the narrow seas ; they into the main ocean ; and thus the ashes of Wiclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."¹ The doctrines of Wiclif did not perish like those ashes. They became, as we shall see, a living and abiding influence in the hearts and lives of many thousands of his fellow-countrymen.

¹ " Church History," p. 171.

CHAPTER IX.

WICLIF'S INFLUENCE ON THE REFORMATION.

The number of Wiclif's followers.—His influence is proved to have been permanent (1) From the continued circulation of his Bible ; (2) From the persecutions in the first half of the fifteenth century ; (3) From Pecock's "Repressor," a description of which is given ; (4) From the continued reading of his books at Oxford ; (5) From the statement of Leland in his work "De Scriptoribus Britannicis," corroborated by the circulation of his sermons ; (6) From extracts given by Foxe in his "Acts and Monuments" from episcopal registers as to persecutions in the early part of the sixteenth century.—Wiclif's books in Bohemia.—Description of John Huss as a Reformer.—The connexion between their teaching and the Reformation in Germany.—Gradual education of the people of England for the Reformation.

WE can have no doubt that Wiclif's opinions, or many of them, had been fixed as articles of belief in the minds of large multitudes in his native land. Under the name of Lollards, the origin of which seems uncertain, they were scattered all over the country. Knighton affirms that "by the labours of Wiclif's poor priests his principles were disseminated, like suckers from the roots of a tree, so that two out of three people were his followers." The plant flourished and expanded amid the sickly and tainted atmosphere of a Court. The pious Anne of Bohemia,

the wife of Richard II., not only studied the Scriptures, but protected the followers of Wiclif. Many of the leading nobility, too, cast in their lot with them.

The assertion has, however, been made that his popularity rapidly declined after his death, and that he exercised no influence on the course of events in succeeding generations. From one point of view, it would indeed seem as if his influence had not been great during his lifetime, and that after his death it quickly vanished away. We cannot understand the statement of the contemporary writer just referred to, that Wiclif had a large number of followers, unless we understand by Lollard one who opposed the extortions of the Papacy. The numbers would be found to be small, if we understand those who took the Word of God for their guide, and were anxious for a reformation in doctrine. The Act "*de Hæretico Comburendo*," passed in 1400, with the full authority of Parliament, shows that the English shrank from doctrinal innovation. We know, too, that many of the Lollards had degenerated from the principles of the great Reformer, and that with them were associated men, calling themselves also Lollards, holding wild, revolutionary opinions, which Wiclif would have utterly repudiated. We may admit that this statement is, to a certain extent, correct, and that no great party perpetuated the name of the Reformer. This admission, however, goes a very small way towards proving that his influence had perished with him. We should indeed be surprised if a movement once so widespread as Lollardy, had left no per-

manent results in the minds of the large body of the people. Thus it would constitute an exception to the movements which have occupied a prominent place in the history of the world. We believe, on the contrary, that Wiclif and his followers sowed the seed which, at the time of the Reformation, yielded an abundant harvest; that his principles had been disseminated through Bohemia; that they were thus transmitted to Germany; and that they thus prepared the way for that great religious revolution which Luther was enabled to accomplish. We shall now endeavour to prove and illustrate the truth of this assertion.

Now, we hesitate not to affirm that, chiefly through the translation of the Bible, Wiclif prepared the way for the Reformation in England. It proved a blessing, not only to his own, but to all succeeding generations. We may form some idea of the eagerness with which it was cherished, when, as we have said, nearly 150. manuscripts, most of them written within forty years of its publication, were discovered at the time of the preparation of the Oxford edition in 1850, and remember the search instituted for Wiclif's writings, the burning of them when they were discovered, as well as the great destruction of ancient manuscripts. The progress of divine truth, however, encountered serious hindrances. These were chiefly the extravagances of many of the Lollardites, and the civil wars which desolated the country in the fifteenth century. Every one, too, who possessed a copy of the Bible, or, indeed, of any of Wiclif's writings, might be consigned to the dungeon, or cast into the midst of the burning

fiery furnace. But, to use the words of Messrs. Forshall and Madden, "Notwithstanding these obstructions, the truth maintained its own course. The versions of Wiclif and his followers continued to be read and circulated. They contributed largely to the religious knowledge which prevailed at the commencement of the Reformation; and at that time they supplied an example and model to those excellent men, who, in like manner, at the hazard of their lives, devoted themselves to the translation of Scripture, and its publication among the people of the land."¹ Thus, like the fabled river of old, the stream rolled on, as it were, in a subterraneous course, until at length, it burst forth into the full light of day, and poured its fertilising tide over a parched and barren soil, so as to clothe it with rich vegetation. "Then was the sacred Bible sought out from dusty corners; the schools were opened; divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues; princes and cities trooped apace to the newly-erected banner of salvation; martyrs, with the unresistible might of weakness, shook the powers of darkness, and scorned the fiery rage of the Old Red Dragon."²

We have other distinct evidence that some time after the death of Wiclif his teaching had not been forgotten, and that men, animated by his spirit, were labouring for the spiritual regeneration of their native country. We see, occasionally, the funeral pyres

¹ Wiclifite Versions, preface, p. xxxiv.

² Milton on Reformation in England.

blazing up amid the surrounding darkness. Thus, in 1427, William White, who had travelled about the country, disseminating the Gospeller's creed, chiefly in eastern England, was burnt at Norwich because he held that men should "seek for forgiveness from God only, that we ought not to worship images, nor idolatrous paintings, nor holy men that are dead."¹ He was not the only victim that year. We have other evidence in the "Repressor," the work of Reginald Pecock, first, Bishop of St. Asaph, and afterwards, Bishop of Chichester, which was written about the year 1449. This work, which had been buried in manuscript, was published in 1860 by order of the Master of the Rolls, under the editorship of Mr Churchill Babington. The design of it was to repress excessive blaming of the clergy, and to defend them from the charges brought against them by the Lollards. The great historical value of this book consists in the fact that it preserves to us the best arguments of the Lollards against existing practices, and that it enables us to prove that the influence of Wiclif's teaching had not ceased in the middle of the fifteenth century. We may fully rely upon it as a just exposition of their teaching, because it is evident from various passages that Pecock had mixed much with them, and had ascertained their opinions. We learn from it that the Holy Scriptures must have been largely circulated among them. Pecock informs us

¹ Foxe's "Acts and Monuments," vol. i., p. 752. See also preface to "Loci e Libro Veritatum," Gascoigne; edited by J. E. T. Rogers, p. lxxii.

that they held that any Christian man or woman, meek, and willing to understand the Scriptures, can, without fail, discover the meaning of any passage which he or she may discover, even in the Apocalypse;¹ that when any man has thus gained a knowledge of the meaning of Scripture, he should listen to no argument to the contrary which clerks might bring against it from reason or Scripture;² and that every ecclesiastical usage should rest on Scriptural grounds.³ In arguing against this last opinion he may be considered as the forerunner of Hooker. As Mr. Babington observes: "It is not too much to say, with the lamented Hallam, that this portion of Pecock's work contains passages well worthy of Hooker, both for weight of matter and dignity of style."⁴ At the same time, we observe that in arguing against the Lollards Pecock expresses the erroneous opinion that, if any conflict should arise between Scripture and reason in matters relating to the moral virtues, Scripture must be brought into accordance with reason.⁵ We learn also from the "Repressor," that the Lollards objected on Scriptural grounds to the lawfulness of images and pilgrimages;⁶ to ecclesiastical laws made by Papal or ecclesiastical authority;⁷ to the Invocation of saints, and to prayers offered by the

¹ "Repressor," vol. i., p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, preface, p. xxix.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. i., pp. 25, 45, &c.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. i., pp. 136-255.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 452.

priests for particular persons;¹ to human traditions;² to the government of the Church by archbishops, bishops, and the Pope, holding that there were only two orders, priests and deacons;³ and that some of them opposed the Sacraments of the Church, and especially the Sacrament of the altar.⁴

"We gather from Pecock's work," to use the words of the editor, "a fact which is exceedingly important to be borne in mind, that what may be called the discontented portion of the Church of the fifteenth century in England embraced persons of very various views. The more moderate portion of that party may fairly be considered as the precursors of the Reformed Church of the age of Elizabeth, while the more extreme portion (to whom the name of Lollards is perhaps now more usually limited) were developed into the Puritanical party of the same period."⁵

We trace, in fact, in this work, the origin and development of that same Puritanism, opposed both by Pecock and Hooker, which many suppose to have been due to the great religious movement in the sixteenth century.⁶ Both parties despised human learning, scorned ecclesiastical authority, and asserted that Scripture is our guide even in matters of ecclesiastical usage. We can have no doubt that this

¹ "Repressor," vol. ii., p. 561.

² *Ibid.*, p. 463.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 416-422.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 563.

⁵ Page xxv.

⁶ Gairdner and Spedding's "Studies in English History," p. 51.

"Repressor" is a most important link in that chain of evidence by which we establish the continuance of Wiclif's work during the fifteenth century, and connect it with the great rupture with Rome in the reign of Henry VIII.

We find that, notwithstanding Archbishop Courtenay's efforts to extirpate Wiclifism at Oxford, described in a former chapter, it was still in existence in that University during the fifteenth century. "Not many years after the foundation of New College," writes Professor Montagu Burrows,¹ "the new doctrines found their way into it, and we find the courtiers reproaching the venerable founder with having raised up a 'seminary of heresy.' In the reign of Henry VI. we find the same Bishop (Fleming) who, at the command of the Pope, exhumed and burnt the body of Wiclif, and scattered the ashes into the little river Swift, founding Lincoln College for the express purpose of counteracting the doctrines which were not so easily mingled with the elements. The violence of the feeling against the Reformer's memory in the middle of the century entertained by one of the few men able at that time to measure his influence, Gascoigne, the Chancellor of Oxford, betrays its importance: "*Ideo vocatur Wycliffe, nequam vita, memoriæ ter dampnatæ*" (with allusion to the three condemnations in London, Oxford, and Constance)."²

¹ "Wiclif's Place in History," p. 124.

² "*Loci e Libro Veritatum*," Gascoigne; edited by J. E. T. Rogers, M.P., p. 141. This book consists of passages selected

We have many other proofs that the coercion exercised did not extirpate heresy at Oxford. Wood, writing in 1411, says,—“The more the doctrines and disciples of Wiclif were trodden on, the more they did increase, not only to the scandal, as by the generality it was accounted, but also to the distinction of the University.”¹ “Peter Payne, alias Clerk, alias Freyne, alias Inglis, was so eager in Wiclif’s cause, that he stole the seal which he set to an alleged letter from the University, and induced the Bohemians in 1406 to believe that all Oxford was of Wiclif’s way of thinking.”² “In 1410,” writes Mr. Thorold Rogers in the preface to the work, “*Loci e Libro Veritatum*,” “the authorities condemned Wiclif, and burnt his books at Carfax. But in 1452, as I have noted in the sheets of my forthcoming volume on Prices, a book of Wiclif, and other books bearing on the controversy which he raised, were bought in Oxford at a cost of 53s.”³

In the year 1476, as Wood informs us,⁴ Edward IV., understanding that certain scholars were corrupted with the heresies and doctrines of John Wiclif and Reynold Pecock, sent a letter to the University, commanding the members to make a search after the

from Gascoigne’s “Theological Dictionary,” illustrating the condition of Church and State, 1403–1458. The manuscript belongs to Lincoln College, Oxford.

¹ Wood’s “History,” vol. i., p. 547.

² Wood’s “History”; Wratislaw’s “John Huss,” p. 93; and “*Loci e Libro Veritatum*,” p. 187.

³ *Ibid.*, p. lxxxvi.

⁴ Wood’s “History,” v. i., p. 630.

books which were in the colleges, and to punish their followers. Soon afterwards this letter was read publicly in an assembly of Regents and non-Regents, and an answer was returned to the following effect. They informed the king that by the direction of the Chancellor they had made diligent search for all the books and tracts of John Wiclif and Reynold Pecock, which were discovered, as it were, deserted and unknown, lying concealed in certain places ; and that, in order that simple men, who are always prone to evil might not be deceived and brought to ruin, they had collected them, and that, following the very wise advice which he had given them, they had unanimously resolved that they should be committed to the flames. They add that this resolution had been carried into effect in the presence of all of them in a public place, and that, if any works of either of them should hereafter be discovered, they should share the same fate. Wood further informs us that those who were found to uphold their doctrines were ejected, or excommunicated, or otherwise punished. "One among them," he adds, was "T. Smyth, who, being notably suspected of heresy, was at length purged of it before the king."

We think that we may say that the effects of Wiclif's work were manifest at the close of the fifteenth century, and that the same ardent love of Scriptural knowledge which had been nourished, as we have seen, by his writings, during that period, was still at that time in existence at Oxford. John Colet, the son of Sir Henry Colet, a wealthy London

merchant, who had been twice Lord Mayor of London, had willingly sacrificed the wealth which he might have accumulated if he had followed his father's occupation, as well as the prospect of distinction in the service of the State, which, through his father's influence, presented itself to him ; he had forsaken those temples in the great metropolis where pleasure erected her throne, and assembled constantly crowds of her worshippers, that he might devote himself at Oxford to the study of the Scriptures and to the propagation of the results of that study among all who came within reach of his influence.

In the year 1496 he began to deliver at Oxford a course of lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul. He had just returned from Italy, to which country he had gone that he might acquire the new learning. When he was in Italy he no longer devoted himself to the works of Plato, but, as his friend Erasmus informs us, "to the study of the Holy Scriptures."¹ In his lectures at Oxford he entered his decided protest against the system of the Schoolmen. They fixed attention on single verses, to which they attached different senses, and employed them to carry on unprofitable discussions. Colet, on the other hand, looked on Scripture as a whole, and not as a carefully prepared collection of texts. He endeavoured to ascertain the drift of the apostle's argument. In this respect he exactly followed the rule for the interpretation of Scripture given, as we have seen, by

¹ "Eras. Opera," tom. iii., p. 456, B., edit. Lugd.

Wiclif. He compared St. Paul's statements of divine truth with those of St. John, in order that he might show the harmony existing between them; he proved that the Epistles were a series of letters addressed to living men, and "designed to be profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness."

These expositions of divine truth produced a wonderful impression at Oxford. Multitudes flocked to hear him. As Erasmus says,¹ "He had not taken any degree in theology (the qualification required by the statutes for lecturing on the Bible), yet there was no doctor of the law or divinity, no abbot or dignitary, who did not come to hear him." As we are informed that they "came again and again, and brought even their note-books," we may reasonably conclude that they came because they were convinced that he was bringing before them the fundamental truths of Christianity. Now we may affirm that this extraordinary interest proves that the spirit excited by Wiclif had been perpetuated at Oxford; and that all classes came in large numbers to the lectures because they had been prepared by his teaching, conveyed to them through the Scriptures, and through his books, to slake their thirst for divine knowledge in the fountain of living waters.

We have proof also that the interest in Wiclif's books was not confined to Oxford, but that it was manifested in this and the following century in all parts of the country. Leland, in an article "Wico-

¹ "Eras. Opera," tom. iii., p. 456, C.

clivus," in his work on the authors of Great Britain, written about 150 years after the death of Wiclif, thus writes of him :¹—"No one can be ignorant that the Roman Pontiffs have fulminated their anathemas against all his lucubrations. Still there were those who with the greatest boldness retained his books, and took care to have many copies of them made. Thus it has come to pass that they are even now read not only in Britain but also in Germany. I myself happen to have seen a few of the large number which he wrote. I have seen three books, 'De Rebus Sophisticis,' a little work 'De Mandatis,' others, 'De Legibus,' 'De Paupertate Christi,' and 'De Coena Domini,' speaking of which work some maintained that he had fallen into the error of a certain Ambrosius Aubertus. I remember also that I have met with his 'Trialogus,' and his book 'De Realibus Universalibus,' of which last work Æneas Silvius makes mention in the thirty-fifth chapter of his 'History of Bohemia.' He is said besides to have written many other works both in Latin and English, which even in our time are religiously preserved and read by some, especially those written in English for the instruction of the people." Among the works which are here described as being read in Leland's time, may be especially mentioned his sermons. Mr. Arnold states that they do not mention him as the author, but that they have come down to us accompanied with the constant tradition of his authorship; and he shows from internal evidence that they have

¹ "De Scriptoribus Britannicis," Oxonii, 1709, p. 380.

been justly ascribed to him.¹ The great number of copies attests their great popularity in the time before the invention of printing, and quite corroborates Leland's statement. The large circulation of these works, expressed in manly, nervous English, contributed, no doubt, greatly to the formation of our language, one of the great benefits which, as we have seen, he conferred on his native country. Through those works he, being dead, spoke to many generations of his fellow-countrymen. He contributed largely to shape their spiritual destinies. He developed the life of the soul, and inoculated their minds with a knowledge of those great truths which are the delight of angels and the triumph of the spirits of the just. By the burning words in them he nerved the arms of many warriors of the Cross, and animated them to do valiantly in the service of their great spiritual Leader. While they were reading those works, that venerable form would seem, too, to be present with them in the chamber of sickness and sorrow, soothing mental and bodily anguish, directing their thoughts to the Great Sufferer, and sustaining them with a hope full of immortality. To their continued use in connexion with the gradual preparation for the Reformation, reference will be made at the end of this chapter. Thus many will rise up hereafter and call him blessed to whose spiritual well-being he was not aware that he had been instrumental. They will acknowledge him as their spiritual father, and greet him with feelings the intensity of which can find no

¹ "Select English Works," vol. i., pp. xiv., xv.

parallel here below. "They shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming."

We have distinct evidence in Foxe's "Acts and Monuments," from the persecutions which were carried on in the dioceses of London and Lincoln, that the influence of Wiclif had been perpetuated through the fifteenth century. He gives instances of persecution, with the causes, carefully extracted from the episcopal registers of London and Lincoln in the years 1509-1511, 1518, and 1520, 1521. We are informed that the fury of the persecutor was directed against the inhabitants of Buckinghamshire, Amersham, Uxbridge, Henley, Newbury, Colchester (in Essex), Suffolk, and Norfolk.¹ He adds:—"And this was before the name of Luther was heard of in these countries among the people." The offences with which they were charged were the reading of the sacred Scriptures, opposition to pilgrimages and adoration of saints, and the denial of the carnal presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. Instances given by Foxe directly connect some of the sufferers with the teaching of Wiclif. One of the witnesses against Thomas Man gives evidence, extracted from the register of Fitz-James, Bishop of London, in the year 1518, which enables us to discover the prevalence of Wiclif's opinions on Transubstantiation in the fifteenth century.² His evidence was that in many places and counties, especially as Man went westward, he found a large number who

¹ Foxe, vol. ii., p. 23, edit. MDCLXXXIV. ² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

were of the same opinion on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with himself, particularly at Newbury, where he found several, who, having been associated for fifteen years in opposition to Transubstantiation, when the hand of the persecutor was raised against them, had either recanted, or been committed to the flames; and that in Amersham he had heard of a large number who, seventy years before 1518, had been found to have continued for twenty-three years in the profession of the same belief. Instances given by Foxe connect others of the sufferers with the teaching of Wiclif. We find, from the London registers in 1518, that several people were charged with having read and used certain books against the faith of the Romish Church, as the "Four Evangelists," Wiclif's "Wicket," a "Book of the Ten Commandments," the "Revelation of St. John," and the Epistles of St. Paul and St. James.¹ John Stilman, in 1518, was charged with having condemned image worship, with having denied Transubstantiation, and with having commended John Wiclif and his book called "The Wicket," and he was afterwards burned.² Others, in 1520, were charged with speaking against the worship of the saints and of the Virgin Mary, and against pilgrimages, with opposition to Transubstantiation, and with having in their possession the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John, and Wiclif's "Wicket."³ John Collins was charged in 1521 with possessing copies of Wiclif's "Wicket," the Gospel of St. John, the Epistles of St. Paul,

¹ Foxe, vol. ii., p. 5.² *Ibid.*, p. 18.³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

James, and Peter in English, and an exposition of the Apocalypse.¹ We find that some of these abjured, but that others went joyfully to the dungeon and the stake, and witnessed a good confession before many witnesses. We gather from these registers that so anxious were they not to be deprived of Wiclif's books that they would conceal them in such places as the hollow of an oak,² and that they would go from one to the other, and "win and turn their minds to that whereon they desired to persuade them, touching the truth of God's word and Sacraments."³ Doubtless, when the flames were playing around them, they would remember the debt of gratitude which they owed to the great Reformer, and they would bless God that they had been enabled to remain faithful unto death to their divine and adorable Redeemer.

We must now consider the influence of Wiclif on the Reformation in Bohemia and Germany. Gascoigne and Leland inform us that students came from Bohemia, sat at the feet of Wiclif, and carried back his books to their native country.⁴ We know, also, that other books were carried to Bohemia for safety by the followers of Anne, the wife of Richard II., after the death of their mistress. We find, however, that up to 1403 his philosophical works chiefly were in use in Bohemia;⁵ but that after-

¹ Foxe, vol. ii., p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴ "Loci e Libro Veritatum," pp. 9, 202; Leland's "De Scriptoribus Britannicis," p. 380.

⁵ Wratislaw's "John Huss," p. 87.

wards all of them were carefully studied. John Huss was a great admirer of Wiclif. He saw in his writings the same energetic zeal for Church reform with which he himself was animated. He therefore soon began to draw from this fountain. So convinced was he of their excellence, that once he is reported to have said that he hoped that his soul would soon be in heaven along with that of Master John Wiclif.¹ Huss wanted something more than a reformation in the patronage, discipline, and ceremonies of the Church. He had probed a deeper wound in the ecclesiastical body. Like Wiclif, with unflinching boldness he had declared that wicked Popes, cardinals, and prelates are utterly without authority; that Christ is the Head of the Church, that the Pope is His Vicar if he walks in His steps; but, if not, he is the Vicar of Judas Iscariot; and that excommunications, unjustly pronounced, must be disregarded. Huss also, like Wiclif, opposed Indulgences, and asserted, like "the master of deep thoughts"—as he often calls him—that it is impossible for the priest to remit the sins of any unless they are first remitted by Christ.² In opposing the assertion of the Romanists that the Pope and Cardinals are the Church, he asserted with Wiclif that "the Church is the collective body of those who are predestinated

¹ Wratisslaw's "John Huss," p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, p. 352. Loserth's "Wiclif and Huss," pp. 207, 212, 236-246, 289. The references here are to the English translation.

to salvation."¹ He also agreed with Wiclif in thinking that the superabundant endowments of spiritual persons should be taken away from them. But he only imperfectly followed him; for, while with him he had an utter horror of the corruptions of the Church, he would not diverge from her teaching through a search into holy Scripture; and he did not give up his belief in some of those dogmas—Transubstantiation, the Communion in one kind, the worship of the Saints, and the Virgin Mary—which Rome had added to the faith. In fact, the fundamental difference between him and his opponents was in regard to the limits to be affixed to the power and authority of the Pope.² Huss became a martyr at Constance, because, like Wiclif, he opposed the supreme ecclesiastical dominion which had so long governed the mind. The monstrous injustice shown by the Council in condemning him for refusing to recant those doctrines of Wiclif, and other doctrines which he never held, and his friend, Jerome of Prague, for refusing to acknowledge that the burning of Huss was just;³ the perfidy which the assembled Fathers manifested when they declared that neither faith nor promise was to be observed to the detriment of the Catholic Church; and their cruelty unsurpassed by any in the history of the Papacy, have given the Council of Constance an unenviable place in the annals of the world.

¹ Wratislaw's "John Huss," pp. 209-211. Loserth's "Wiclif and Huss," pp. 195-200, 205, 206. ² Loserth, pp. 224-234.

³ Wratislaw, p. 209.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

The opinions of Wiclif had been propagated in Bohemia through the study of Wiclif's books and the preaching and works of John Huss. Burning with an indignation which was felt by the whole nation, John Ziska swore to avenge the death of Huss on the perpetrators of the crime. Selecting one out of the numerous grievances of which they complained, the Bohemians alleged, as their reason for taking up arms, that they had been deprived by the Council of Constance of the Communion in both kinds, and displayed the Eucharistic cup on their banners.¹ The war was carried on with a barbarity perhaps unparalleled in the history of the world. Assuming the name of Taborites—from the word tabor, signifying tents, in which they encamped on a hill near Aust—they designated their neighbours as Idumeans, or Moabites, or Philistines, and, inspired with the spirit of the old dispensation, gave no quarter to their enemies, but bathed their swords in blood till they were weary of destroying. Ziska is said to have burnt priests and monks in pitch. He was one of those remarkable men who have never been trained in any school which could have given him a knowledge of the art of war, and who are indebted to their own marvellous skill for the victories over the foes confederate against them. The sight of the clubs and flails, which he taught the Hussites to arm with iron, and to make instruments of tremendous power, and of the carts which he showed them, how to range in the battle-

¹ See my "Epochs of the Papacy," pp. 232-236.

field, and to connect so as to become an impregnable fortress, often struck so much terror into the bravest of the chivalry of Europe that they fled ignominiously before them. After the death of Ziska, Procopius led on their armies to victory. The Council of Basle finding, in 1433, that it was utterly in vain to subdue them by force of arms, proposed a discussion on the points at issue between the two parties. The Bohemian deputies proposed four conditions of reconciliation, called the Articles of Prague, which were : the free preaching of the Word of God in the Bohemian language ; the abolition of the endowments of the Church ; Communion in both kinds ; and the punishment of clerical offenders by the civil tribunals. The Hussites came to no agreement with the Council, but the moderate section of them, called Calixtines, from "calix," the "chalice," to which they attached the greatest importance, were induced by deputies from Basle, who followed them to Prague, to consent to certain amendments in three of the articles, which served effectually to alter their meaning, and to be satisfied provided the Communion in both kinds were restored to the Church. The Taborites, or the extreme party, however, who, unlike the other sections, had views beyond the articles, and were opposed also to Purgatory, image-worship, prayers for the dead, saint-worship, and Transubstantiation, refused their consent to this compromise ; went to war with the united hosts of Roman Catholics and Calixtines, and were defeated in a battle at Lapan, on May 30, 1434, in which Procopius was slain, and

the spell of Bohemian invincibility was broken for ever.

But the Hussite Church had not altogether perished. We no longer, indeed, find on the page of history the offensive names of Taborite or Calixtine. The latter party, after having, like the Taborites, for years displayed a savage ferocity in defence of their principles which we cannot too strongly condemn, had been satisfied, as we have just seen, with a compromise, and were now contending for their former opponents with the same enthusiasm which they once exhibited in fighting against them. But no concession would satisfy the Taborites. Unsubdued by persecution, they continued to be the unceasing opponents of the dogmas and corruptions of Romanism. In the year 1457 they formed an association, called the "United Brethren of Bohemia"; and, having made application to the Waldenses, in order that they might receive from them the true episcopal ordination, they obtained through them their first Bishop, Matthew, who was consecrated by Stephen, a Bishop of that ancient body of Christians. We find that, purified by suffering, they no longer fought the battles of the Lord with carnal weapons; and that they were distinguished for a sanctity and an elevation of character which could not be found in them when they mustered armies for the battle, and delighted in war.¹ When Luther came forward to do battle with the Church

¹ Hardwick, in his "Church History of the Middle Ages" (p. 410), says nothing about doctrinal deficiencies of the "United Brethren."

of Rome, he was welcomed by a numerous body, the spiritual descendants of John Wiclif and John Huss, who must have prepared the way for him by renouncing, like their ancestors, the sacrifice of the Mass, Purgatory, Transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, and the adoration of images, and by propagating their views, not only in their own neighbourhood, but even in the most distant parts of Germany, perhaps through some of those books of Wiclif which Leland, in the extract given above, states that he saw in that country.¹

We have said enough to suggest the importance of Wiclif's influence upon the Reformation in Germany, and to prove the continuation of his work in England from the time of his death to the Reformation under Henry VIII. His followers continued in an unbroken line to ponder prayerfully the records of heavenly truth, and to lift up their voices against the unscriptural dogmas of Romanism. Strong predispositions in favour of a Reformation must have been excited by their preaching and works. The despised Wiclif literature which, as we have seen from Leland, had proved its vitality by its circulation even in his day, was planting seeds of truth in the minds of the people. We know that he assailed in these works all the doctrines of the Church of Rome, condemned in the Articles of the Church of England, Transubstantiation, image-worship,

¹ The learned Dr. Buddensieg, of Dresden, is preparing a work, the object of which is to show the connexion between Wiclif and Luther.

the Invocation of saints, Indulgences, and works of supererogation. Thus then we connect him directly with the preparations for the Reformation in this country. Henry VIII. himself furnishes us with evidence of the continuance of Wiclif's influence in England. In 1530, when the question of his divorce was before him, he asked the University of Oxford to send to him the "Articles of Wiclif condemned at Oxford and London in 1410, and at Constance in 1414." Wood informs us that the king, having thanked it for sending them, "after due consideration of the said articles (wherein, as 'tis said he found that the Pope's power was not found, nor founded on God's word), took occasion thence to vex the Pope, who hindered his design for being divorced from his brother's wife, by promoting Wycleave's doctrine and ejecting papacy out of his kingdom."¹ Milton, with far less knowledge than ourselves, saw at once the conclusion to which the preceding facts and statements should lead us. He writes:—"Had it not been for the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable Wicklef, to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Huss and Jerome, no nor the name of Luther or of Calvin had been ever known. The glory of reforming all our neighbours had been completely ours."²

The work, in consequence of the fear of the per-

¹ Professor Burrows's "Wiclif's Place in History." See also Wood's "History," 1530, pp. 126, 127.

² "Areopagitica."

secutor, was carried on in silence and obscurity, Wiclif's followers must have eaten the bread of life in *secret, and with carefulness*, and must have drunk the waters of life with *astonishment and trembling of heart*. Occasionally, after the martyrdoms above referred to, they were carried to the dungeon and to the stake. The flames flicker in Foxe's martyrology from 1455 to 1485, when the ecclesiastical fires paled before the broad glare of the civil conflagration. But in the reign of Henry VII. men were again called upon to yield up their lives for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. We can thus trace only indistinctly the education of the English people in the great truths brought forward at the Reformation, because, from fear of persecution, it was carried on in the secret chamber, or in the lonely valley among the hills, or around the pale watch-fire in the bosom of some large forest. We do not think that we make too strong an assertion when we say that to this gradual education, for which we are indebted to our great Reformer, we owe our preservation from those errors and extravagances which elsewhere marred the work of the Reformers, when they swept away the abuses and superstitions of ages, and obtained "the liberty wherewith Christ made them free."

THE END.

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